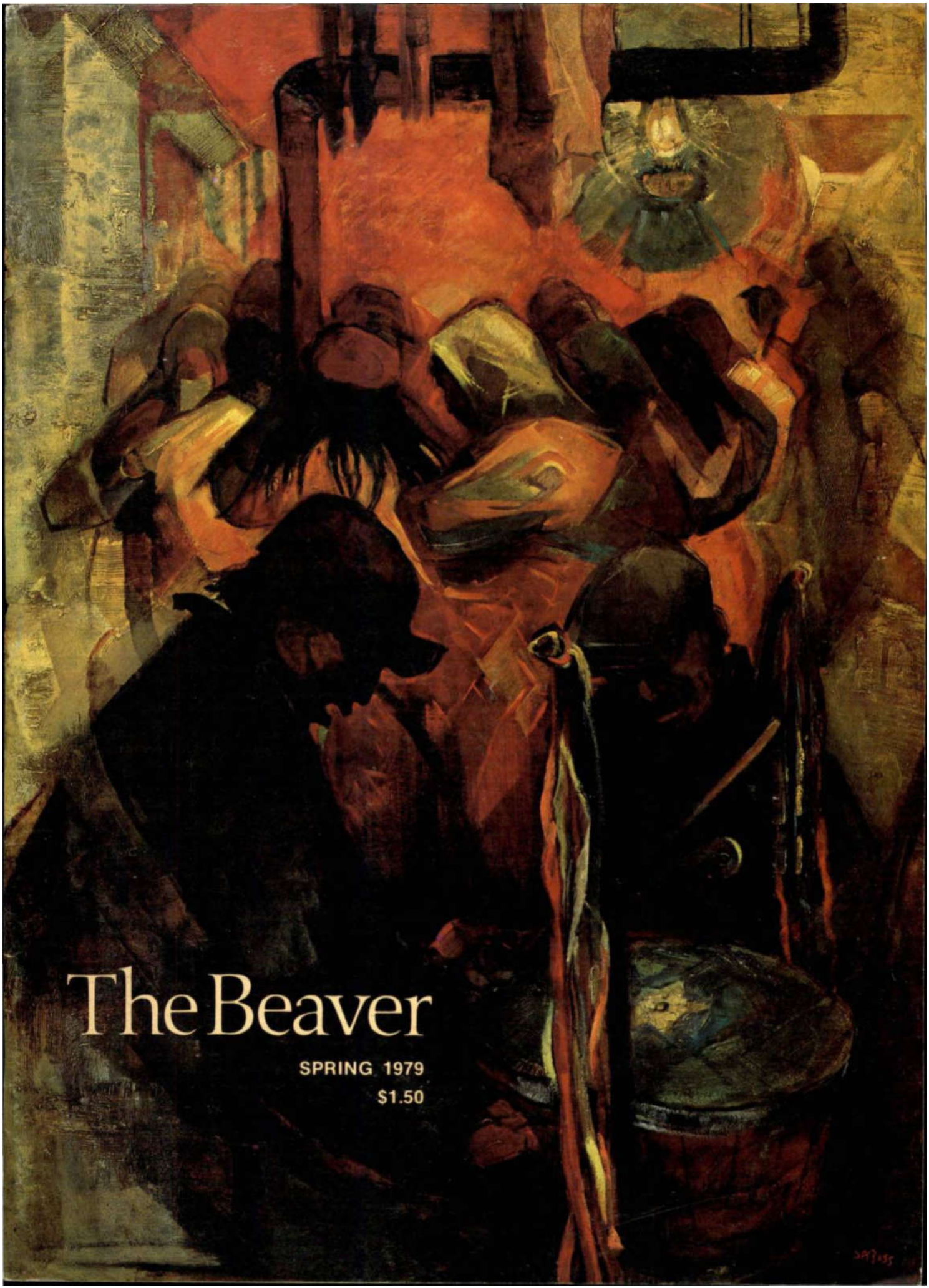

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MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH

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COVER: *'Drum Dance'*. Oil painting by Susan Ross. From sketches done in 1969 on the Saulteaux Reserve at Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba.

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'Tempers grew shorter as the winter lengthened and the new recruits succumbed to the bottle and inevitable melancholia.'

Dr Pannekoek is Chief of Historic Research for Parks Canada, Prairie Region. His area of special interest is the social history of the fur trade to 1774.

Rob Gillespie is an historical interpretive specialist for Parks Canada, Prairie Region.

'Corruption' at Moose

By Frits Pannekoek

Illustrations by Rob Gillespie

ON THE COLD, DESOLATE, wind-swept shore of Hudson Bay, winters were long and there was nothing but brandy and talk to relieve the boredom of the endless ice and the interminable meals of salt geese and dried pease. Tempers grew shorter as the winter lengthened and the new recruits succumbed to the bottle and inevitable melancholia. Rebellions brewed and violence was too often the order of the day. Only a few found life even tolerable. These few lived a careful compromise between the heavily regulated life of the Company fort and the freedom offered by the camps of the 'Home Guard' Indians — those Indians who lived near the fort year-round and provided local food supplies to the Company.

While the communities that emerged in the 1730s at the Bayside might be dismissed as of interest only to the antiquarian intent on examining the minutiae of the fur trade, their study has broader implications. They fit in the tradition of the single-resource communities that make up the mid-Canada corridor, ranging from eighteenth-century Moose Factory to the nineteenth-century gold camps of the Klondike. All had economies based on the extraction or collection of a single staple, and all were dominated by a few large companies whose organization dictated the social structure of the communities they created. Because of their isolation, physical unpleasantness, the finite nature of their resource base, and the consequent reluctance of many labourers to do anything but acquire enough to retire 'back home', the societies that they contained were to a large degree unstable, transitory and dominated by the single working male.

Doubtless some men from each isolated staple community managed to create new lives centred on the hinterland. At Moose the more adaptable among the servants married Indian women, had children, trapped furs, and abandoned close connections with the Old World. To them the Company became only a supplier of the goods that remained essential to their survival. By 1740 a significant portion of the trade was generated by 'the corruptors', as those who had 'gone Indian' were called. It is difficult to determine exactly how the new staple society of the Bayside functioned. Those at Moose, for example, were careful not to reveal too much, wary that London might censure. Only when new, inexperienced chief factors bent on reform were appointed, do the daily journals become revealing. James Duffield was one such garrulous reformer and he nearly forced the destruction of the half-European, half-Indian way of life which had emerged at Moose by the 1740s. His journals, filled with paranoia and rebellion, tell much about the staple society of Moose in the 1740s.

The problems faced by staple communities centred on removing men from one social setting, like pre-industrial England, and placing them in a radically different environment, at once isolated, unnatural and intensely regimented as it was at Moose Factory. Unable to come to grips with the cold and the tyranny, most found escape in drink. Alcoholism was the principal social problem of those resident at the Bayside. Indeed, for some, alcohol was the object of all activity. The surgeon at Moose for one was a 'Compleate Swob' constantly thirsting for liquor. Many of the work accidents at Moose were alcohol-related. One man consumed so much 'bumbo' — that fur-trade mixture of rum, water, sugar and nutmeg — that he fell off the sloop and promptly drowned. With some regret and much haste his mates lost no time in auctioning off the contents of his chest. The chief factors were always afraid that the men on watch, who were too often drunk, would, spitefully or accidentally, set fire to the buildings. The courage to commit suicide could also be found in the bottle. 'Brandy-death' was common, and known in Rupert's Land as a Northwester's Death.

The Company was understandably concerned at the loss of life and work caused by this constant guzzling. Almost annually the chief factors were instructed to

reduce the quantity of alcohol consumed by the servants, but they were only occasionally successful. When James Knight in 1715 refused to issue the normal ration of bumbo to his men they called him — among other things — a 'lyeing Old Rogue'. No doubt Richard Staunton suffered the same abuse when he tried in 1738 to limit alcohol to 'one bottle at a time betwixt four men and that only at Seasonable times'. He was also unsuccessful.

Logically, the Company could have regulated brandy consumption simply by refusing to supply it in any significant quantities; however, communications with the Bay were controlled by the captains of the Company's annual ships and it was relatively easy for them to take on a few hundred extra gallons. The factor's refusal to land the brandy would have sparked a rebellion headed by the captain and supported by the servants and the ship's crew. Most chief factors alleged that the 'private brandy' at the Bottom of the Bay was traded to the servants by the captains and their crews in exchange for illicitly obtained furs, but often it was simply sold. Of course since the captains were usually the agents for the private affairs of the servants, it was a simple matter to arrange payment. It was also rumoured that the captains sometimes ransomed the annual supplies to the chief factor. If the factor did not allow a trade in brandy the annual cargoes would not be landed. Should the chief factors report the incidents, the letters of complaint could be intercepted or simply denied. While it seems likely that blatant blackmail was rare, it would not be too much to suppose that in order to keep peace amongst his men, each chief factor had to reach his own informal understanding with the captains.

While alcohol was the principal social problem at the Bottom of the Bay, the moral indignation of the chief factors was aroused by others which they viewed with even greater alarm. Many of the servants were less than enamoured with the prospect of the five years of chastity, obedience and poverty that the Company's service seemed to demand. In response, some 'went native'. They learned Indian languages, became conversant with Indian customs, became adept at the trapline, and quite often married into Indian families, fathering and otherwise acquiring numerous dependents. The greatest of the 'corruptors' (as those who had 'gone country' were inevitably called) was Augustin Frost of York, and later Moose Factory. Frost was a very quiet man, knowledgeable in all the Indian ways and connected to a number of Indian women who ran his traplines. Frost was indispensable to the fort's trade and country supplies, married as he was to the daughter of the captain of one of the groups of Home Guard Indians, old Muccatoon (Nimitikige). The captain and his two sons Pasqueijo and Messhacopway brought food and provisions to the post in return for the security and prestige afforded by post connections. So influential was Frost's example that he was credited with the 'corruption' of a whole generation of servants.

In fact, by the 1730s Moose had become an 'Indian Factory' and most of the men allowed their families to reside in the compound. Indian relatives were rarely, if ever, shut out at night and supplies and credit were not generally denied. While the men were content the system worked well; the Company received its furs and the men managed a tolerable existence. Attempts on the part of the Company to alter the easy relationship between Indian and servant were always resisted. Depending on the regional strength of the French opposition, the men and their families could conspire against the Company's trade. The French were very close in the 1730s and it took little to divert trade to them. What neither the London Committee nor some of the chief factors seemed to appreciate was the crucial influence of the servants and their Indian families in the management of the trade.

The provisioning of the Company's post further reflects the close relationship between Indian and servant. Geese, the staple of the factory's diet, were shot by the men while out at the goose camps with their half-breed and Indian families. The quantities of geese required to provision the fort were enormous. The eighteen men at Moose in the 1730s usually received per four-man mess, two or three salt geese per day, one and one-half pounds of flour, slightly less than one quart of pease, plus beer brewed at the factory. Although this was supplemented in the summer with fresh garden produce, for over eighty per cent of the year the diet of salt geese was invariable and monotonous. Only in September and May were fresh geese available. At the same time the chief factor of the fort had a diet that was considerably more English, with fine cheeses and the best of wines. Combined with the insecurity and monotony of the diet — for there were days near the spring and fall hunts when the geese barrels were empty — this preferential treatment provoked many to near-riot. A full stomach meant a passive servant, but stomachs were rarely full.

Accentuated by the vagaries of diet and climate, disease was the other great problem at Moose in the 1730s. Pain and discomfort were normal, especially after age thirty as the body succumbed to the ravages of age and cold. George Howy, a member of the Moose Council, was attacked by a severe case of gall-stones. Arthritis was expected as a matter of course, and it crippled many of the older servants. Venereal disease was well known and the fear was always present that the men would infect the natives. There were, however, surprisingly few on-the-job accidents and even fewer cases of frost-bite.

As might be expected mental health posed a problem on the Bay. Many men suffered from winter melancholia. The confinement indoors, the

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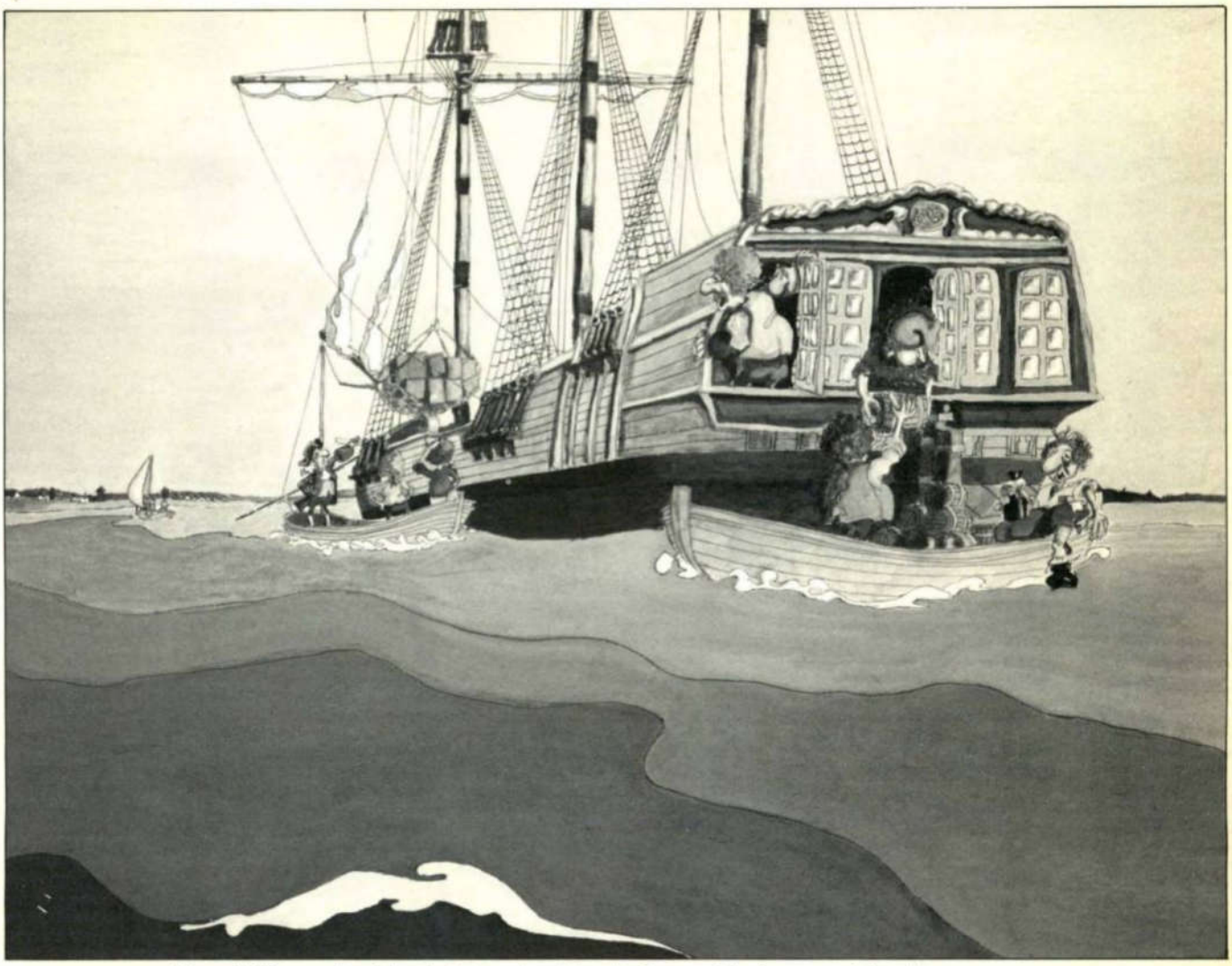
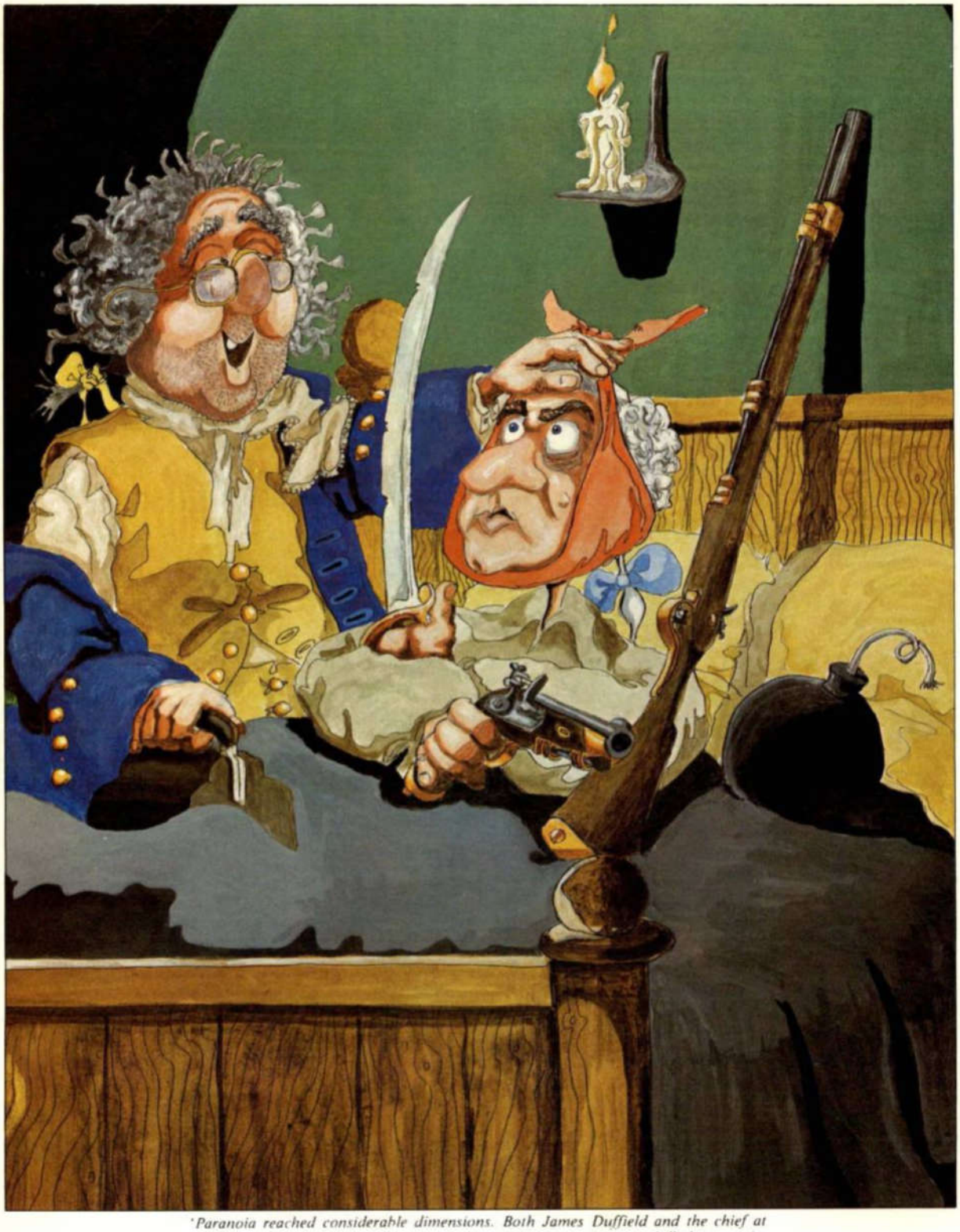


'Most chief factors alleged that the "private brandy" at the Bottom of the Bay was traded to the servants by the captains and their crews in exchange for illicitly obtained furs . . .'

monotonous diet, the long dark hours, the isolation and the constant fear of fire made life seem an endless and fear-filled drudgery. Suicide was contemplated with awesome frequency, and many macabre incidents can be found in the factory's journals. Paranoia reached considerable dimensions. Both James Duffield and the chief at Albany, Joseph Isbister, felt that their surgeons were trying to kill them, a plot for which there is no evidence. Rather than submit to their surgeons they chose to find comfort in each other's tales of woe and treachery. Admittedly, the surgeons were not of the best variety. The one at Moose, a resident of some forty years, was an alcoholic whose careless approach to hygiene took on extraordinary proportions; but like the other post doctors he conceived himself to be irreplaceable and acted with appropriate arrogance.

The politics of this melancholy society reflected life's despondency and paranoia. There was inevitably a faction comprised of the new servants and the sailors, who preached discontent and insurrection. While from time to time these malcontents were in the majority they were rarely in control. Rather in the 1740s it was the 'country' or 'corrupted' faction who exercised power with confidence and little opposition. There was, of course, a small, albeit consistent, pro-Company group who, by disposition, tended to support authority no matter what its form.

Politics were to a large degree dictated by the chief factor and the advisory council structure imposed by the Company. In theory, the factor, with advice from his council (who were appointed by the London Committee on the recommendation of the factor), was responsible for regulating all aspects of life. Usually the council included the factory's surgeon, two or three of the senior experienced servants, and the



'Paranoia reached considerable dimensions. Both James Duffield and the chief at Albany, Joseph Ishister, felt that their surgeons were trying to kill them . . .'

accountant. At Moose one of the senior servants on the council was Augustin Frost who, through the power of his own personality, managed to have things largely his own way. He could turn those with a rebellious disposition in whatever direction he thought appropriate.

At Moose the leaders of the rebellious trouble-makers were the surgeon and a tradesman named Joseph Robinson. In the 1740s Robinson acted as the 'Attorney General' for the factory's discontented, because of his capacity to ferret out the legal niceties which supported the men's demands. At one point Robinson argued that since the men's contracts were not stamped, as required by the Stamp Act, they were not binding. The servants could therefore do as they pleased.

This bag of legal tricks was added to every year with the arrival of the annual ship. The sailors, a notably rebellious lot, were always free with advice for their brothers on the shores of the Bay. Many of the servants were, in fact, recruited through the captain. Coates, who served Moose during much of the 1700s, had connections in Stockton, and many sailors and servants came from there. They knew each other and their fraternity seems to have been a strong one.

The factors for their part were not always happy with the selection of new recruits: the tailor at Moose was labelled as 'crazy', while the carpenters were 'indifferent and corrupted' or 'lazy and rebellious'. The 'corrupted' and 'rebellious' factions often formed different groups among the servants. Nevertheless, they tended to reinforce each other, since all those who stayed for long periods acquired relatively common Indian connections. New recruits were always ready for trouble at the slightest hint of real restraint of their activities. The Indian parties, like that headed by Frost, tended on the other hand to tolerate the Company's power so long as their lifestyle was not affected. If the Company preached a reformation of corruption, they quietly subverted and opposed, for in the end they knew full well that no alternative to the Company existed. The new society that had emerged at Moose was dependent upon the Company's technology, without which survival would be impossible.

Tempered by Company dictate and Indian custom, the society at Moose, by the 1730s, had evolved its own unhappy structure. It was a society in which one's position in the Company's hierarchy was only useful if accepted by the old Indian hands whose families controlled the post's trade. It was during the height of Frost's influence over the Home Guard Indians that the Company moved, through its newly appointed chief factor, James Duffield, to reform the 'corrupted' social order of Moose. But it was to be a Pyrrhic victory which only succeeded in destroying the Indian community that had become Moose Factory and in pushing the factory servants to the edge of anarchy. Duffield nearly destroyed the Company's trade in the process.

Little is known of Duffield's early connections with the Hudson's Bay Company; yet as a close friend of and executor for a discontented Company servant, a certain Mr Waggoner, he must have been familiar with its operations. When Mr Waggoner died, a dispute with Captain Coates over the will permanently secured Duffield against the sea captains who annually supplied the posts at the Bayside. Probably influenced by the Waggoner fiasco, Duffield made it his mission to reform the Bayside and the captains. The Company, for its part, must have hoped that Duffield, with his promised rule of iron, would rectify the corruption that they believed was draining their revenues.

Immediately upon his arrival at Moose in the fall of 1741, James Duffield set about to effect a vigorous reformation, but the factory council opposed him with silence and deceit. Duffield grumbled that he felt he had been

> dropp'd down amongst a nest of *free & accepted* Masons, without being initiated by ye bretheren, but as an Intruder on their laws, by virtue of ye Compys authority: & therefore at all events I was to be hoodwink'd & kept from discovering their Secret measures . . . such a Scandalous Society.

The council maintained its despondent silence as Duffield assumed vigorous and absolute control of all aspects of life. He banished the Indians, including the men's families, from the factory's compound and refused credit to all. Alcohol was attacked with equal vigour. He confiscated first the surgeon's then the servants', brandy.

During the following months Duffield piled oppressive regulation upon regulation. Every evening at sundown he locked the factory's gates himself, saw every servant to bed at the eight o'clock bell, and checked every change of the watch. He never went to bed himself until all the men were asleep, about ten o'clock, and he was always the first at work in the morning, rousing any who slept too long. The men's lockers were periodically searched for furs, and any fur bedding was summarily confiscated. Any infractions were severely and corporally punished.

As tension mounted in the post Duffield took to carrying a brace of pistols and a stout cane to defend himself. The men were increasingly unhappy at their perceived loss of liberty which they likened to slavery. William Drever, the new 'Attorney-General' became the focal point of much of the resistance, as he plotted insurrection with the factory's cook, surgeon and carpenter. Determined to break the back of the opposition, Duffield seized the carpenter, handcuffed him and turned him outside the factory where he stayed in a small Indian tent for three days and nights. Such force continued to be applied with vigour. On 4 December 1741, a man was lashed to the stove, and

'Every evening at sundown he locked the factory's gates himself, saw every servant to bed at the eight o'clock bell, and checked every change of the watch.'

on 23 December a seaman, John Ridley, was caned for being 'idle and shifting in his work'. Even on Christmas Day, Duffield went about after eight in the evening seizing brandy and generally putting a damper on merriment.

Duffield was particularly afraid that the men would deliberately burn the fort down. Frost, for one, attempted to fire one of the flankers. To prevent this, Duffield usually chained trouble-makers to the stove to make sure they would burn before the factory. Late night drunken brawls and burning candles could also cause accidental fires, so to make certain the men did nothing but sleep after eight, the doors to the cabins were removed. This, of course, also made it difficult to hide Indian wives and to plot conspiracies.

Through terror, humiliation and constant vigilance Duffield managed to keep the lid on rebellion. The energy and techniques that kept him alive are much in evidence in an incident that occurred in 1743. While Duffield was writing up the sailing orders for the master of the Moose sloop, the crew was in the factory spiriting up a rebellion against him with their 'countrymen', the factory servants. Mr Longland, the master and a favourite of Duffield's, was the first to be attacked. Duffield was to be next. Hearing a disturbance, and Mr Longland's cries, Duffield grabbed his pistols, raced into the factory's court and chased the conspirators back to the sloop. Later that evening after careful inquiry he seized the ringleader, one Porto Bello, whom he had whipped the year before. When Porto Bello threatened to burn the fort, himself included, Duffield locked him up in a small shed with seven biscuits and one gallon of water. Then in another fit of bravado Porto Bello swore to hang himself. Duffield obliged by providing the rope, but Porto Bello complained that the rope was not long enough, whereupon Duffield called all the servants together for the final humiliation of their hero whom he provided with a very long piece of rope indeed. Porto Bello again refused and threatened starvation, as a dramatic but less immediate form of suicide; but by now his credibility had evaporated. Duffield remained in control and the men were left to look for a new leader.

While congratulating himself on keeping riot at a minimum, Duffield was well aware, even before 1743, that his life was not safe. As early as September 1741, as the fort restrictions grew more trying, hints of Indian-engendered assassinations were made by some of the servants. Given the close connection with the Home Guard Indians this was a very distinct possibility, but why these threats were never carried out is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, Duffield chose to keep his distance from the Indians.

Duffield also systematically set about to break Frost's control. From the very first, Frost and the council had continually interceded on the men's behalf, begging Duffield to moderate his regime. Initially Duffield privately reprimanded the council and forbade their continuing connection with the Indians. In March of 1742, however, he decided upon another solution. He was determined to prohibit Frost any connection with the Indians and to send him home in September when the annual ships arrived. That winter and spring Duffield kept a careful eye on Frost from the factory windows, and whenever he saw an Indian approaching he would dash out to prevent the meeting.

Nevertheless the men schemed with the Indians that winter and plots were hatched in rapid succession. Most of these Duffield held in utter contempt. According to him the men were

> but *very Shallaw* pated politicians & [I] can easily dive into ye bottom of all their plots, before they are ripe for execution.

He felt that a rebellion of the Home Guard was unlikely; but while there was no uprising, the Home Guard, at Frost's instigation, refused to provide geese

or fish for the Company's table. Frost felt that lack of food due to mismanagement on Duffield's part would be sufficient excuse for a rebellion, which might then persuade the Company to recall the chief factor.

More importantly, Frost connived with the Home Guard to trade with the French. Some contacts were made but their success was negligible. Supplies from the French, especially powder, could not be guaranteed. In fact Duffield's careful and rigorous trade had pushed the overplus from 922 13/60 Made Beaver in Richard Staunton's last year to 1936 21/40 in his own last year. Duffield finally broke the back of the Home Guard resistance by sending Frost to Albany in July. Without their leader and with generous gifts to the Indian leader, the reluctant trade with Moose continued.

The factory's servants were not Duffield's only object of attack. He also believed that the captains were at the root of much of the discontent. Captain Coates was accused of interfering with the internal operations of the factory, landing brandy illicitly, engaging in clandestine trade, and ransoming the annual cargo. The captains he argued were also responsible for much of the bad behaviour of the men. The Company must not

> Suffer their Sea Commanders any longer to Uphold laziness, sottishness and disobedience, by which they have so long found it their interest.

Duffield, however, never managed to break the powers of the captains, who had the ear of the London Committee.

The London Committee was, for its part, not impressed with Duffield despite his apparent successes. On 5 May 1743, they publicly chastised him in their annual letter to the factory's council:

> [We] do believe that the Proceedings of your Chief by Governing with a Rod of Iron, causes disturbances in the Factory, and thereby is detrimental to our Affairs.

At the same time he was urged to maintain friendly relations with the sea captains. There was to be no more premeditated conflict. Whether Duffield would have moderated his regime will never be known, for during the winter of 1743-44 his health deteriorated rapidly and in August 1744, he returned home.

After Duffield's departure, the factory slowly returned to its old ways. George Howy was appointed by Duffield to act in his stead. Having maintained a quiet opposition during the previous four years, Howy spent the next months trying to put things right. He had deplored Duffield's rough usage of the Indians, and his displays of favouritism. Howy's immediate problem was to get the Indians hunting geese again since during the previous starvation winter, Duffield had shut the Indians out of the factory. In order to survive they had plundered the Eskimos instead. That winter of 1744-45 Howy let the indigent Indians into

'Duffield was particularly afraid that the men would deliberately burn the fort down. Frost, for one, attempted to fire one of the flankers.'

the factory, and re-established a close relationship with the Home Guard. The servants were allowed more freedom and the rebellions of the past years vanished. Once again 'corruption' reigned; Duffield's reformation had been undone.

Actually there were few Duffields at the Bayside to disrupt the development of the staple society. Most of the chief factors rose through the ranks and were aware of the exigencies of life at the factories. Most acquiesced in silence, and little leaked to London in the journals. The fur trade had produced a society of its own that was half Indian, half European, at once independent of the Company in terms of its internal structure, yet dependent upon the Company for its technology. By virtue of their situation and their function the communities of the early eighteenth century on the shores of Hudson Bay had to create their own social patterns over which the Company had little influence. Indeed, attempts to impose an external and essentially foreign order upon the Bayside societies always served to retard rather than advance Company business on Hudson Bay. ◆

Search for the North Magnetic Pole

By J. Lewis Robinson

The author joined the faculty of the University of British Columbia following 'Expedition Polco'. Photographs were taken by Professor Robinson during the search.

H-8

Geographer Lewis Robinson at Cambridge Bay, August 1947.

DURING WORLD WAR II there were indications that the North Magnetic Pole was no longer in its mapped location on the west side of Boothia Peninsula in the central Canadian Arctic. Since the magnetic compasses used in the northern hemisphere, particularly for navigation in its more southern latitudes, were supposed to point to this area it became apparent that the new position of the Pole had to be found. This was the purpose of a joint effort called 'Expedition Polco', of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the federal Department of Mines and Resources in 1947.

The location of the North Magnetic Pole was first determined by Sir James Ross who explored Boothia Peninsula in 1830-33. Better scientific information was obtained by Roald Amundsen's party in 1903-05 while they wintered on nearby King William Island. During the following decades numerous observations of magnetic declination and dip were taken by officers of the Dominion Observatory across southern Canada, and during 1943-47 about 200 magnetic stations were added north of latitude 60 degrees. These latter observations indicated that the average position of the Pole had moved to the north or north-west and its location might be on Prince of Wales Island.

This island in the central Canadian Arctic was explored in the 1850s. Its coasts were mapped by searchers for the lost Sir John Franklin expedition. Only one European, Captain William Kennedy, formerly of the Hudson's Bay Company, had ever seen the interior of the 14,000-square-mile island; he crossed it during the winter of 1852. Prince of Wales Island remained unknown and unsettled for about 90 years. During the 1930s and early 1940s it was reported that a few Eskimos from the trading post at Fort Ross and from Boothia Peninsula had crossed the sea ice to the island to trap in winter but they had found that both fur-bearers and game animals were scarce there.

'Expedition Polco' left Ottawa on 19 July 1947, in a Canso flying boat piloted by Flying Officer John Drake, with Flying Officer John Goldsmith as navigator. Both had previous arctic flying experience, having transported government geodetic parties in the Eastern Arctic the previous year and having been part of the group which rediscovered the 'lost' Spicer Islands in Foxe Basin. The scientific personnel were led by Paul Serson and Jack Clarke of the Dominion

Observatory Geodetic Survey. Other physical scientists were attached to the expedition to bring back reports of this little-known part of Canada. They included Y. O. Fortier and H. Steacy from the federal Geological Survey, N. Polunin, botanist from the National Museum, and the author, the first professional geographer to be employed by the federal government, with the Northwest Territories Administration.

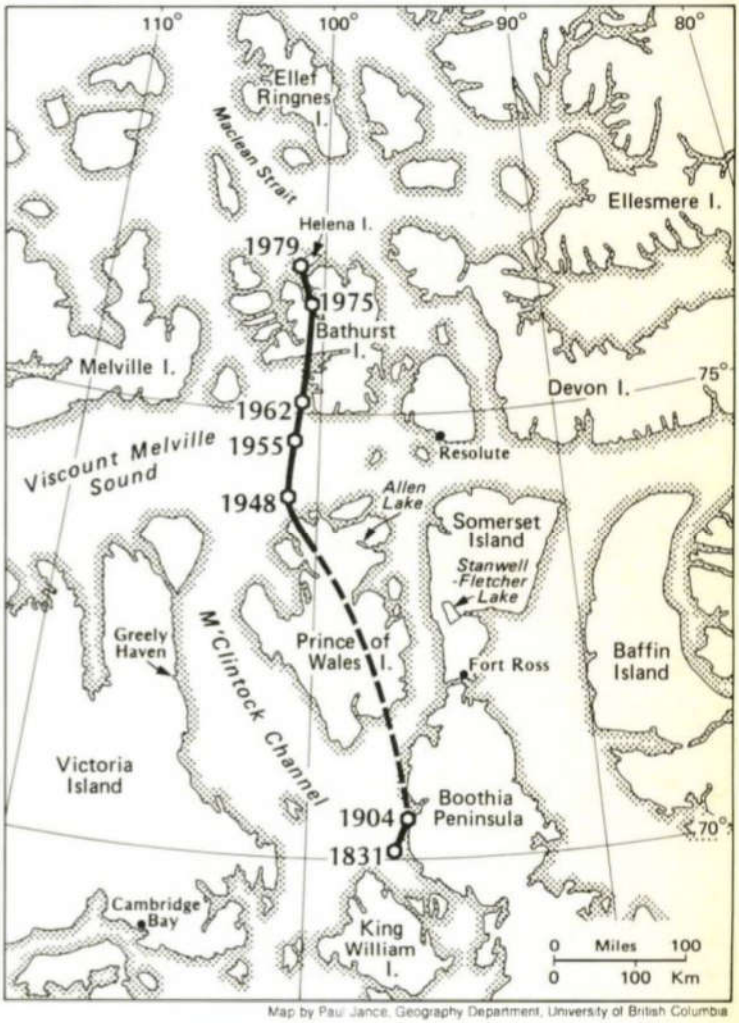
The story of this exciting adventure which relocated the 'lost' North Magnetic Pole was never told in the popular magazines of that time. I left the expedition before its conclusion to return to my new teaching position at the University of British Columbia, and unwisely gave an interview to newspaper reporters in Vancouver about the geographical discoveries of the expedition. The headlines went across Canada — 'Geographer discovers North Magnetic Pole' — and understandably made senior civil servants in the Geodetic Survey most angry. Despite my 'clarification' to the government that I had never claimed to 'discover' the Pole — nor did the original story say so, just the headline writers — the damage was done. Government officials asked that I say no more about the North Magnetic Pole and leave further accounts to be stated in official government reports. Thirty years have passed; perhaps these wounds have now healed and the story can be told.

The expedition reached its base at Cambridge Bay on south-eastern Victoria Island towards the end of July. En route one magnetic point had been established at Aberdeen Lake, west of Hudson Bay. From there we flew west to Aylmer Lake with the intention of obtaining more magnetic data. This lake was still ice-covered and we were unable to land and so flew on to Cambridge Bay.

On 1 August the expedition flew northward along the low, lake-dotted coast of eastern Victoria Island, planning to take magnetic observations somewhere west of Prince of Wales Island. M'Clintock Channel was packed solidly with large ice floes grinding southward, pushed by winds and ocean currents. The only ice-free inlet along north-eastern Victoria Island was Greely Haven where the Canso was landed. The last, and only, non-Eskimo reported to have been in this part of the Arctic had been there in 1904.

One felt a sense of history as the magneticians set up their instruments near the beach. They had been working for only about two hours when we realized that the pack-ice was beginning to move into the mouth of the inlet following a change of wind. Camping equipment was hurriedly tossed into the plane. Delicate magnetic instruments were carried carefully to the Canso without packing, and held tenderly by the scientists during the take-off. The plane roared into movement and lumbered down the inlet. Each moment the take-off space was becoming

In 1904 Amundsen placed the North Magnetic Pole on Boothia Peninsula. It was relocated on northern Prince of Wales Island in 1947 and since then its position and movement have been carefully monitored. If the northward movement continues it will be in Maclean Strait by the 1980s.



Map by Paul Jance, Geography Department, University of British Columbia

The scientific party responsible for relocating the North Magnetic Pole in 1947: from the left, H. Steacy, Y. O. Fortier, J. Clarke, N. Polunin and P. Serson.

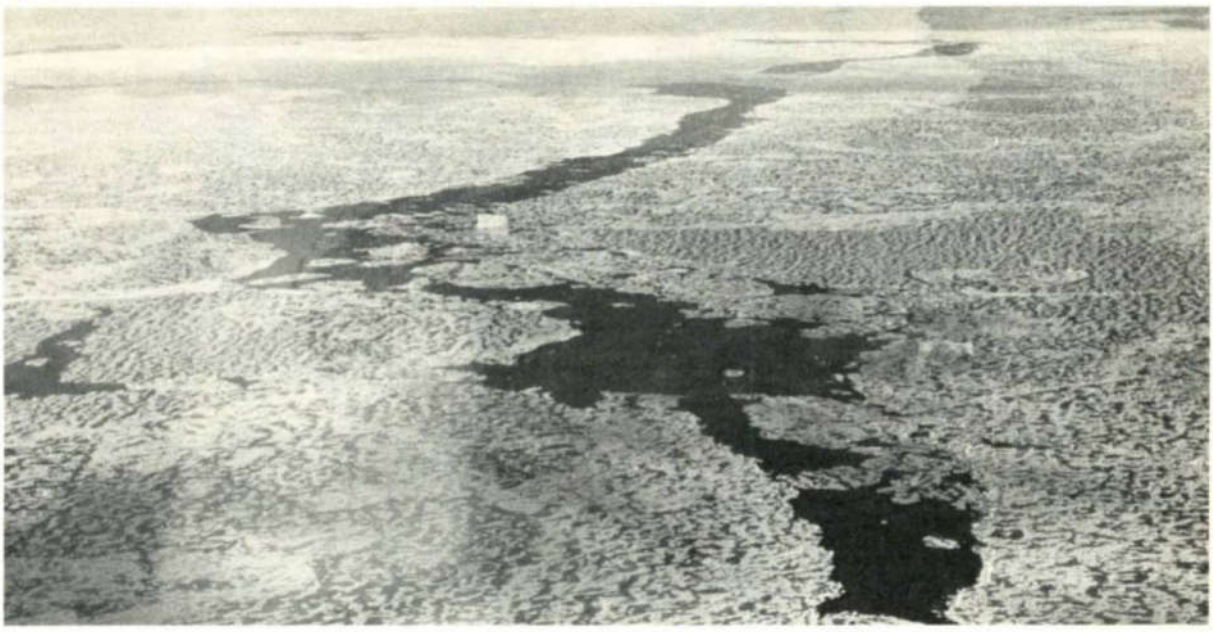
The Royal Canadian Air Force Canso on the beach at Cambridge Bay, August 1947.

shorter as the broad floes silently drifted towards the plane. The pilot was just easing back on the stick when the hull bounced over a submerged shoal. A rending, grinding noise filled the Canso. In the next second the plane was into the air and thick ice floes floated harmlessly under the wings. It had been close.

Since it was only noon, the group decided to find another observation point that day. No other landing sites were found southward along the eastern coast of Victoria Island. Similarly, the northern coasts of King William Island were packed solidly with heavy floes. The interior of that island was searched until a large, deep, unmapped lake was found in the south-eastern part, inland from the Hudson's Bay Company post at Gjoa Haven. The fact that the hull of the Canso may have been damaged during the take-off from Greely Haven was a worry, but it was decided to try another landing and see what would happen. There were no problems. After observing magnetic declinations and dip for a day, the party moved on, searching for another possible landing site.

No suitable lakes were found in the interior of King William Island and harbours along the coasts remained full of pack-ice. When gasoline became low, we flew back to the base at Cambridge Bay. We had covered over one thousand miles of little-known arctic territory in two days, but only one good magnetic point had been obtained for the effort. Ice conditions appeared unfavourable in the Arctic Islands and it was decided to complete the desired mainland points first.

The Canso was flown towards Point Lake, along the Coppermine River, but low clouds blanketed the



M'Clintock Channel, full of pack-ice as far as the eye can see. Mid-August 1947.

mainland and the lake could not be located. A landing was finally made on wheels at Yellowknife. There, an inspection of the Canso brought the dismaying news that the shoal at Greely Haven had seriously damaged the hull plates and sprung several rivets. Repairs were needed, and the expedition suffered another delay while the plane was taken south to Calgary.

On 8 August the expedition covered a geographical south-north cross-section of Canada by flying from dry grasslands at Calgary to arctic tundra at Cambridge Bay. The forbidding Arctic greeted us with a strong three-day gale which nearly wrecked the Canso on the beach. It was the forewarning of a generally bad season throughout the Arctic which hampered supply vessels and aircraft with unfavourable ice conditions and poor weather. The morning of 12 August was clear and bright, and encouraged an attempt to reach Prince of Wales Island. The secret of the location of the Pole possibly lay there.

M'Clintock Channel was full of pack-ice as far as the eye could see. Some of the broad floes were over a mile across, and we saw little open water. Cape Swinburne at the southern tip of Prince of Wales Island, proved to be on an island in an indentation in the south coast. Southern Prince of Wales Island was low and lake-covered, being somewhat similar to the landforms of eastern Victoria and most of King William Island. It differed in having little vegetation. Most of the surface was disintegrated sedimentary rock scattered either in low ridges or flattened domes.

Guillemard Bay, shown on the sketchy maps of that time as a small indentation in the south-east coast, proved to be a long, deep inlet, extending inland about ten miles, and then bending sharply to the northward for another twelve miles. Several islands near the entrance held out the pack-ice, and low rocky hills around the northern arm gave shelter for an ideal landing place. Magnetic observations were taken during the rest of the day. During that time a small polar caribou quite tamely approached some of the crew; it was the only animal life we saw on the island, despite previous reports of the possibility of musk-oxen living there.

Next morning we traversed the interior of Prince of Wales Island as far as the north coast, but low clouds hampered visibility and no further landing lakes were located. An attempt was made to land near Prescott Island, off the east coast, but an opening through the clouds revealed that Peel Sound was full of loose pack-ice.

The magnetic observations at Guillemard Inlet indicated that the Pole was to the north. It was therefore necessary to obtain another observation somewhere in the north of the island. On 14 August another flight was made from Cambridge Bay to Prince of Wales Island, but again low clouds covered most of the island, except for sections of a level central plateau which contained no lakes large enough for landing. Numerous shallow, gravel-filled stream beds cut across this plateau. We set course for Boothia Peninsula, crossed the rugged rock ridges of this peninsula eastward of Pasley Bay, and found a scenic, sheltered landing site on the central east coast. There, the sensitive magnetic instruments again indicated that the North Magnetic Pole was no longer on

Boothia Peninsula. We hoped to land at Pasley Bay on the return trip, but low clouds, the characteristic of arctic weather, obscured the whole west coast of Boothia Peninsula.

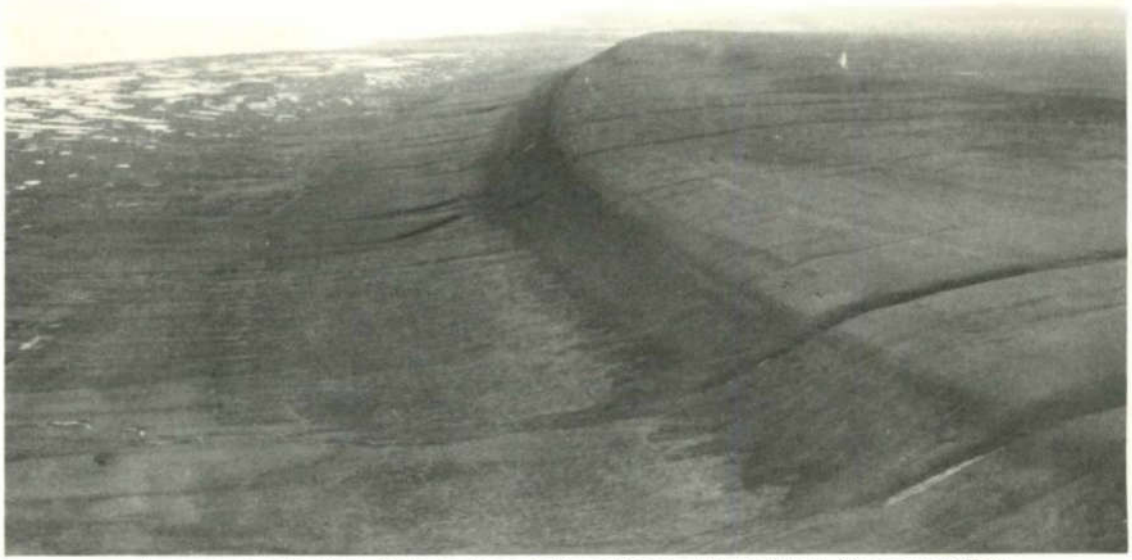
Two more unsuccessful flights were made to Prince of Wales Island on 18 and 21 August. Since there were then no meteorology stations north of Cambridge Bay, we had no means of knowing what the weather might be. These flights added new information about landforms, vegetation, and ice conditions, especially over the lakeless interior and barren southern regions of the island. A new group of several small islands was discovered in M'Clintock Channel, north of Gateshead Island, and a larger, previously unreported island was mapped in the ice-filled channel between Gateshead and Victoria Islands. In my enthusiasm of actually putting new islands on the map for the first time, I named these islands for my newly-born son, David. The name 'David Islands' was not accepted by the federal Board of Geographic Names, and the tiny islands remain unnamed; supposedly no one has yet walked on them.

On 22 August we made another flight to Prince of Wales Island. Our persistence was rewarded, for clear weather held over the island. We flew north from Guillemard Inlet to the west side of Browne Bay. The sharp, red escarpment of the central plateau rose abruptly above a narrow lowland west of the bay. Picturesque valleys were cut into the plateau rim by small streams draining from the level interior.

Finally we found a rectangular lake in the north-eastern part of the island, and attempted a landing into a cross-wind. The first try was unsuccessful, and when the Canso began to bounce from wave to wave the pilot took to the air. The second attempt brought a similar result, but when the throttle was opened to get back into the air, the plane had lost flying speed and could not rise. Each leap into the air was longer than the one before, but each time the plane crashed back into the icy water, shaking the hull from end to end. I sat in the rear observation blister wondering whether the next rise would lead to safety, or whether the next crash would tear off the tail. The shore was fast approaching. Finally, the nose came up, water skimmed beneath the battered hull, and the plane was back in the air.

Pilot Drake had searched for this vital lake for weeks and he was not to be denied. Once more he circled the lake and this time guided the plane into a perfect landing. Afterwards we were told that the radio had ceased functioning on the way. If we had crashed no one would have known where we were.

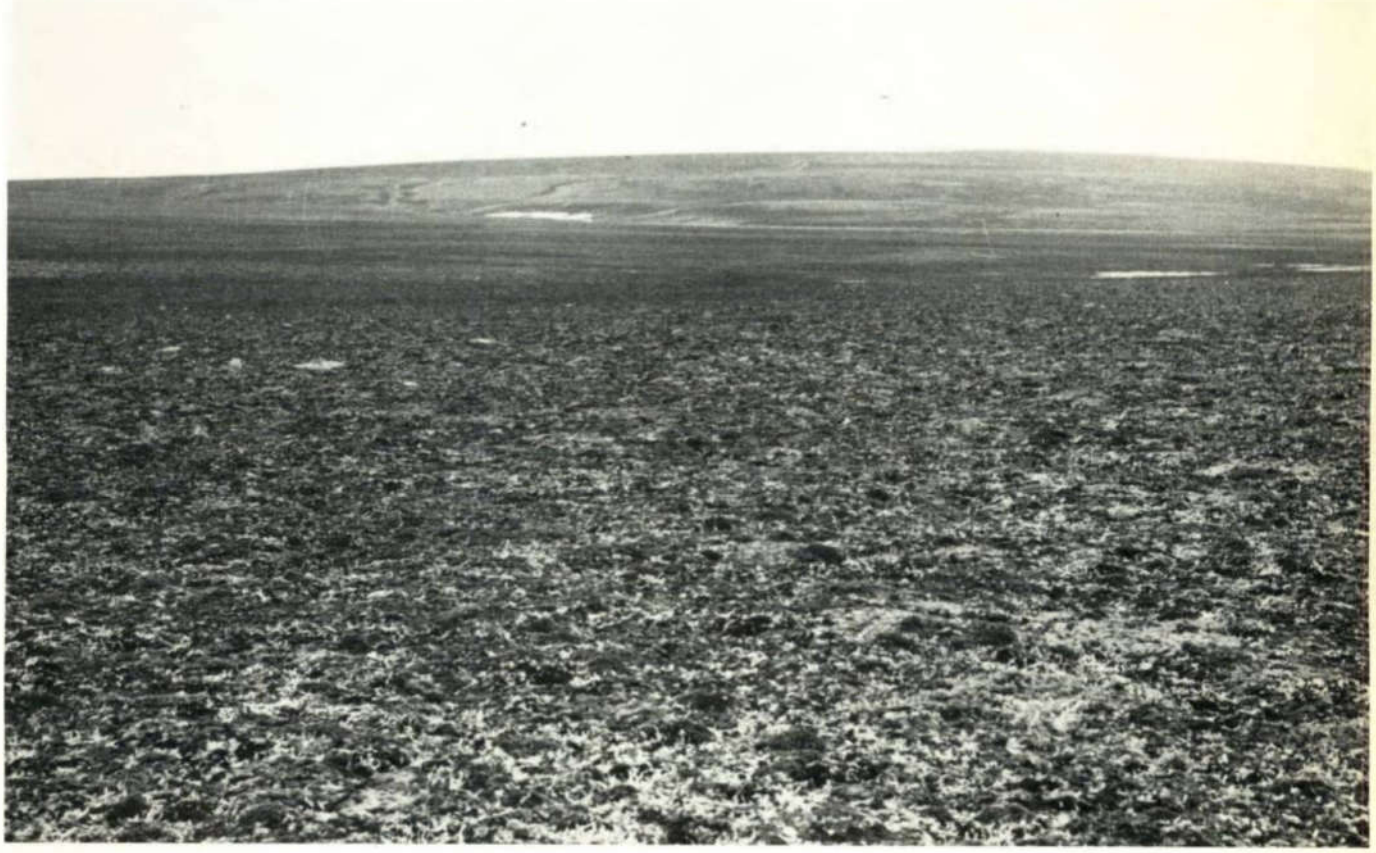
We spent a full day on this lake (later named Allen Lake for our co-pilot) on north-eastern Prince of Wales Island. As the magnetic observations progressed, the magneticians excitedly reported that we were almost 'sitting on the North Magnetic Pole'. The Pole is not a stable point; its mean position was



An escarpment of red sandstone on the east side of Prince of Wales Island. Picturesque valleys were cut into the plateau rim by streams draining from the interior.

The camp on Allen Lake, northern Prince of Wales Island, was almost 'sitting on the North Magnetic Pole'.

The site of the North Magnetic Pole, August 1947. Since then it has gradually shifted north.



Navigator John Goldsmith who had 'an uncanny sense of direction'.

apparently moving in a north-south ellipse of about 60 miles in length. Later calculations of these observations in Ottawa placed the mean position of the Magnetic Pole to the west of Allen Lake.

Compared with the skill and experience of the crew, and the scientific knowledge of the magneticians, I contributed little to the expedition except to record a variety of new environmental information about this part of Canada. We could not help feeling at that time, however, that we were a part of history in the making. There was satisfaction in knowing that our expedition members were probably the first people to ever walk across that part of Canada — certainly the first in recorded history. I had been reading a great deal of arctic history and exploration in the preceding four years, as a means of compiling information about the region's geography, and I was thrilled to know that 22 August 1947 would become an event to record in arctic and Canadian history. The North Magnetic Pole had been found again. Little was I to know then that it was not going to stay put.

We returned to Cambridge Bay through overcast and cloudy weather which proved the skill of our navigator, Johnny Goldsmith. His only reliable instruments were an astro-compass and an uncanny sense of direction. At the base we received the disappointing news that there was only enough gasoline left there for one more flight. The obvious choice was central Somerset Island to define the eastern limits of the Pole's movements.

On 26 August the final flight was made across ice-filled Franklin Strait to the site of the abandoned Hudson's Bay Company trading post at Fort Ross, on the south end of Somerset Island. As I looked down at the post and the narrow, strategic opening of Bellot Strait, my memory went back to almost exactly four years before when I was on my first trip into the Arctic. I recalled my dismay as we drifted ice-bound in the historic old *Nascopie* off Fort Ross in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue Post Manager W. A. Heslop and his wife Barbara, and clerk D. W. Munro. They had been without supplies for two years; when the *Nascopie* failed to reach them again that summer, the staff were brought out by plane in November 1943.

We flew north-west of Fort Ross to our previously selected landing site on huge Stanwell-Fletcher Lake (this lake had been named for Captain J. F. Stanwell-Fletcher who had aided in the aerial rescue of the Fort Ross personnel a few years before). Unfortunately, this large lake was still almost full of last year's ice which had not melted; a small section in the north-west was ice-free but there were no suitable beaches along the rocky shore to moor the Canso. Once more, unpredictable ice had foiled the expedition.

West of Stanwell-Fletcher Lake I mapped, for the first time, an abrupt line of rugged, 1,300-foot hills which, I later learned, marked an escarpment boundary of Precambrian rock of the Canadian Shield. Those were the days when numerous aerial expeditions into the Canadian Arctic were 'discovering' hundreds of new geographical features: lakes, bays, rivers, and mountains. (In 1944 I had flown over, and mapped by hand and eye, a new large river west of Hudson Bay and south of Chesterfield Inlet, and called it Josephine River for my wife-to-be. This name is still on the maps of that region.) The members of the expedition decided that this 'mountain' range on Somerset Island would be 'mine' — the 'Lew Robinson Range'. Since we had not landed on the lake or set foot on the hills there was a lively academic debate as to whether they were hills or mountains. The fact that my official report called them 2,000-foot *mountains* suggests my unscientific enthusiasm for their impressive size! The federal Board of Geographical Names in Ottawa, however, was tired of the flood of new names given by 'three-week explorers', and decided that all future features in the Northwest Territories would be named after dead people. 'My' mountain (hill?) range remains unnamed today and I have reminded several years of geography students to look after my 'rights' when I am dead!

In late August Expedition Polco shifted base camp from Cambridge Bay to Yellowknife where fuel was available. The intention of landing at Bathurst Inlet on the route southward was foiled by fog over the mainland coast. We made several flights from Yellowknife northward across the rolling tundra.

Three attempts to reach Bathurst Inlet failed when clouds and fog hid the inlet each time. During one of these flights, an observation point was established at Point Lake on the Coppermine River, and later another one at Jolly Lake, north of Yellowknife, near the northern tree-line. On 5 September the expedition was terminated, and shortly afterwards we returned to Ottawa. Expedition Polco had served its purpose of obtaining magnetic readings close to the suspected position of the Magnetic Pole. These observations, when later analyzed by scientists in Ottawa, enabled the Pole to be located with further accuracy.

In addition to magnetic data, a great deal of new information was obtained regarding the landforms, geology, vegetation, and ice conditions of this Central Arctic region. The ancient maps of almost a century ago were corrected, and a great deal of new detail added with the aid of numerous hand-held aerial photographs.

The expedition was hampered by bad weather and ice conditions, illustrating the necessity of alternate plans when operating in the Arctic. Instead of sixty hours planned flying time, the battered Canso actually flew one hundred and ninety hours, and then obtained only ten observation points, rather than the desired twenty. Despite difficulties, more was accomplished in a few short weeks than the valiant old explorers achieved in years of struggling. In such a manner did the North unfold.

In the more than 30 years after 1947 the North Magnetic Pole continued its movement to the north-west. It is expected that its position in 1979 will be on tiny Helena Island, just north of Bathurst Island in latitude 76.5° N and longitude 101° W. Based on recent years of motion the Pole is calculated to be moving about 11 kilometres per year north and 3 kilometres per year west. Although federal scientists in the Earth Physics Branch do not expect this northward motion to continue forever they have no means of predicting when it will change.

A scientific account of the motion and calculations of the North Magnetic Pole has been written by E. Dawson and L. R. Newitt, in the *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences*, Vol. 15, No. 6, 1978. In this article they note that the Pole has two motions — a secular one and a daily one. The secular movement to the north-west is shown on the map on page 13. The route of migration is unknown between Amundsen's plotting on Boothia Peninsula in 1904 and our relocation on northern Prince of Wales Island in 1947. Since this latter date the Pole's position and movement have been monitored closely.

The Magnetic Pole also experiences rapid, daily movements in the form of crude ellipses with a clockwise rotation. Apparently the Pole has 'quiet' days and 'disturbed' days as a result of ionospheric currents. On some days the Pole may be displaced about 65 kilometres from its mean position, and on severely disturbed days this variation may be 100 to 150 kilometres. The major axis of this daily motion is aligned in the same north-northwest axis as the long-term secular motion.

The 'Lew Robinson' Range in central-west Somerset Island.

Permit me to conclude with one final story about the North Magnetic Pole. I am the Canadian editor of wall maps of Canada published by an American map company and used in American and Canadian schools; as such I have been able to keep the North Magnetic Pole accurately located on each new printing of these maps. But this frequent change is disconcerting to teachers who are used to having things 'fixed' on a map and not changing. The map company received frequent complaints and questions from teachers who were unable to explain, or did not know about, this movement. We even debated editorially whether it wouldn't be easier, and avoid questions, to leave it in one place! A crisis arose in 1958 when I located the North Magnetic Pole, correctly, in ice-filled Viscount Melville Sound, north-west of Prince of Wales Island. Complaints poured in from teachers who insisted that the Pole *had* to be on land, and could not be in the water. Obviously, there was an error on the map. So for the next edition of the Canadian map, rather than having to explain to teachers that the earth's magnetic field is not controlled directly by either land or water, I 'hastened' the north-west movement of the Pole and placed it safely on the land of south-western Bathurst Island several years before it got there! I suspect that this problem and question will arise again in the 1980s if the northern movement continues and the Pole is plotted on future maps in ice-covered Maclean Strait.◆

The Guerin Family of Whitewood, N.W.T.

By Eileen M. Williamson

In 1962 Mrs Williamson, now of Toronto, founded and edited the 'Springdale News' a bi-weekly newspaper that covered 26 towns and outposts around Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland.

Dr John Francis Guerin who, with his wife, organized what was probably the first professional theatre group in central Canada.

NOTICES of 'Mr. & Mrs. Guerin's Costume Recitals' posted in the towns of Regina, Wapella, Whitewood, Moosomin, Qu'Appelle and Grenfell in the 1880s were read with excitement by the people who had come from England, Scotland, France and the more settled parts of eastern Canada. Many of the pioneers, some from wealthy families and accustomed to all the amenities of life in a cosmopolitan city, felt starved at times for the type of entertainment they had enjoyed. They must have remembered with nostalgia, the plays and dramatic readings of Shakespeare, Dickens, Inglesby, Tennyson and others. Now, here at last, was the opportunity to have a night at the theatre — and the word spread across the sparsely settled countryside. Horses were hitched to buggies or sleighs, and the people would drive for miles for a 'night to be remembered'.

These performances were arranged by my grandparents, Angelica Mary and Dr John Francis Guerin. Soon after their arrival in 1885 in the little town of Whitewood, they organized a dramatic company which was probably the first professional theatre group in the West. By 1896 they were in great demand in the surrounding towns, and in spite of the hardships, lack of stage equipment, lighting, and costumes, the plays and readings were professionally and successfully produced.

Angelica Mary Guerin was born in England, the daughter of John Tritton who was Director of St Thomas' Hospital in London. She had been brought up in the way all girls of her class were in the mid-19th century. She could paint and draw; she sang beautifully and had been a pupil of Signor Farrari, Walter Lacey and Arthur Sullivan of Gilbert and Sullivan fame. She graduated from the Royal College of Music and had a chance to sing a part in the Oratorio, but her parents would not allow her to be on the stage. She had, however, a great natural talent for acting, and somehow had managed to get a bit part in the D'Oyly Carte Company, where she met her husband, my grandfather, who was also a keen talented amateur actor. He was a dentist by profession.

Although her family had not been enthusiastic about the young French dentist, John Francis Guerin, Angelica married him. They had three of their five children in England: Elsie, Roy, and my mother, Gertrude May. Then Francis and Angelica decided to emigrate to Canada. He would go first to establish his practice, and she would follow. Angelica's mother was

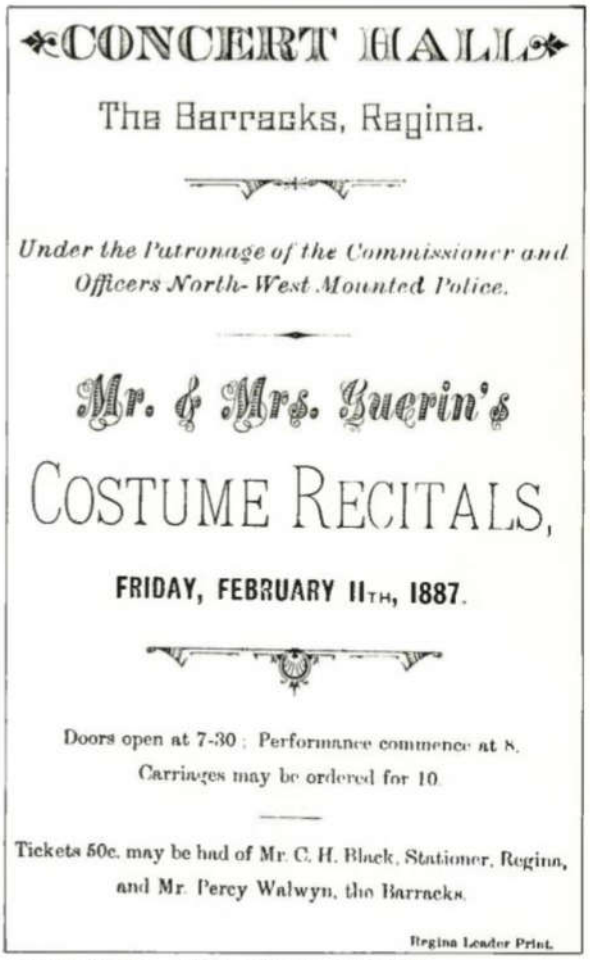
Angelica Guerin as Mrs Jarley in 'The Old Curiosity Shop' by Charles Dickens.

distressed by the decision. Angelica assured her the French had been in Canada for more than 200 years and that Montreal where they expected to live, was quite civilized. Francis was to arrange for a house and there would be servants. She was filled with a sense of great adventure and looked forward to her life in a new land.

On her arrival in Montreal, instead of being met by her husband as she had expected, Angelica was given a letter. He had met a beguiling Irishman whose destination was the village of Whitewood in the North-west Territories. This man had persuaded Francis to go west and take up a homestead which the government offered as inducement for people to settle there. The picture he painted of the West and the adventure of travelling across that vast land by train had been irresistible.

And so Angelica and her three children resumed their journey in a colonist car that provided the bare necessities. At that time the Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed to about 40 miles west of Regina. Whitewood, just to the east of Regina, had a small station and several stores and houses.

The only house that the young dentist had been able to find for his family was across the road from the



CONCERT HALL

The Barracks, Regina.

Under the Patronage of the Commissioner and Officers North-West Mounted Police.

Mr. & Mrs. Guerin's

COSTUME RECITALS,

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH, 1887.

Doors open at 7-30; Performance commence at 8.
Carriages may be ordered for 10.

Tickets 50c. may be had of Mr. C. H. Black, Stationer, Regina, and Mr. Percy Walwyn, the Barracks.

Regina Leader Print.

A poster for one of the first 'Costume Recitals' presented by the Guerin family in Regina.

station. He had developed a practice but he was away a great deal, visiting his patients in towns and settlements strung along the railway tracks, or travelling to remote farms by a team of horses and a democrat. Winter set in, and the cold was unbearable. Angelica was up many nights trying to keep the house warm. One night the station agent, seeing lights on in the house and knowing that Angelica was alone with three small children, came over to see if anything was wrong. He found her dressed in furs and a heavy ulster, stoking the kitchen stove, trying to keep warm.

After the first winter Grandfather acquired his homestead and built a four-bedroom house, painted white with green shutters. They christened it 'The Knoll'. He hardly knew a horse from a cow, and certainly he knew nothing about growing grain or farming, so he decided to hire a man to look after the place while he and the family moved to Qu'Appelle. St John's College and an Anglican theological school had been established at Qu'Appelle, and there were interesting people to meet and a lively social life.

Angelica, being a typical English lady, did not want her children to attend the small public school, so she had a Swiss-educated woman come to the house each day to teach Elsie, May and Roy. They were enjoying life in the more settled community when word came from Ottawa that the homestead in Whitewood would revert to the Crown unless the family lived on it. To comply with the regulations, they moved back to the little white house with the green shutters, and there two more children were born, Nora and Rupert.

Angelica could find no one in Whitewood qualified to teach the children, so she taught them herself. They sat around the stove in the evenings, Grandmother and each child knitting socks or sweaters or working on sewing and embroidery. Then it was that their training in drama started. Angelica would read aloud to them from Dickens or Shakespeare. They mastered their lessons in elocution, enunciation and deportment, and soon acted out the parts of the various plays, dressing up in the costumes my grandparents had brought over from England.

In 1898 the whole family took part in 'The Golden Fleece' in Qu'Appelle. The account in the *Qu'Appelle Progress* of 21 April 1898, stated:

> This company played before an appreciative audience when Dr. and Mrs. Guerin placed before their patrons an entertainment of a high class character commencing with Planche's extravaganza 'The Golden Fleece'. Master Hubert Guerin rendered his speech with a clearness and distinctness that showed a great amount of study and dramatic ability. The part of Jason was played by Miss Elsie Guerin, and Miss May Guerin played the part of Medea. The songs fully proved the capabilities of these rising young vocalists. Mrs. Guerin was irresistible in the comedy 'Popping the Question', backed up by her two eldest daughters. Miss Nora Guerin showed a great amount of her mother's piquance in the maid's part.

Another newspaper story announced an Easter performance by the 'Guerin Dramatic Company' in Whitewood:

> Bills are out for the last ten days for a Dramatic Performance to be given in the Opera Hall next Monday (Easter Monday) by the Guerin Dramatic Company. The ability of Dr. and Mrs. Guerin as entertainers is well known in the Territories. They last performed in Whitewood at the Agricultural Hall in March 1894 when they thoroughly amused their audience in two sketches, 'The China Mania' and 'The Happy Pair'. Mr. and Mrs. Guerin are supported by a powerful company who, in their combined strength will produce 'Castle' on Monday night. Entirely new scenery and costumes will be used, and everything will be done to make this a performance worthy of a Whitewood audience on an Easter Monday. Tickets as usual, and plan of the Hall at J. J. Knowler & Co. For cast of characters see large bills and programmes.

Some of the mothers in the village, impressed by the knowledge and behaviour of the Guerin children, asked if they could send their children to Angelica for tutoring. This meant that the young people had many friends with whom they worked, played and roamed the prairies.

One of May's early memories is of a hot summer when the water in the well was low. Grandmother had the three oldest children, Elsie, May and Roy, take the wagon to a spring where they could fill a barrel with water. On the way back, the horses reared up in fright. To the children's horror they saw an angry bull thundering after them. They whipped the horses to full speed, made a mad dash across the prairies and managed to get safely home — but all the water in the barrel was spilled during the wild journey. On another day, Nora, the second youngest child, brought home a stray dog that proved to be a nuisance, chasing and attacking other animals and chickens, and creating a total uproar. Grandmother told Nora that it must belong to someone and she would have to find the owners. When some Indians came along and asked for the dog, Nora thought it belonged to them, so let it go. She told the Indians to take good care of it, and see that it was kept at home and properly looked after. A few months later, there was a pow-wow in the village, and all the children were there to watch the dancing. One of the Indians came up to Nora and said 'Dog make good soup'. She was aghast at this turn of events and often recalled the incident in her later years.

In the 1880s there were only two dentists in the whole of Assiniboia: one in Moosomin and my grandfather in Whitewood. His practice extended to many towns as far north as Saltcoats and Yorkton, and west to Moose Jaw. He was away a good deal of the time, and often was called on to act as a medical doctor too. Many times his patients paid him with a calf, a pony or horse, or some sort of produce. Times were difficult for settlers and for the bands of Indians too, who faced starvation with the decline of the buffalo herds.

One blustery evening, an American came to the door to warn Angelica that Indians were coming and they should leave. Then he ran off to hide in the haystack. Angelica with the help of the older children hurried about, hiding most of the food in the root cellar and the oven and leaving just enough to give to

the Indians. About nine in the evening, seven Indians arrived. She gave them flour, tea, bread and meat, and they built a large fire and camped near the house. All through the night she kept watch but she had no need to fear. They treated her with great respect and courtesy and were grateful for the food she provided. Before morning, they continued on their journey.

The little town of Whitewood was close to the Pipestone Creek, and it was this area that was chosen by some members of the French nobility to set up their estates. Pipestone Creek, normally a quiet stream, could turn into a raging torrent in the spring thaw. But the Frenchmen saw only the deep grass, the ravines, the beauty of the willow trees and the wild flowers and, in the distance, the low hills of Moose Mountain where moose, bear, wolves, lynx, foxes and coyotes could be found. They made it their home.

Over the years the French Counts developed close friendships with the Guerin family. Angelica and Francis and their children, all fluent in French, were popular with the Counts, and it became the custom to stop at Guerin's house for a drink after a fox hunt. Several of the titled and wealthy Frenchmen lived in Whitewood; others had ranches where they tried various schemes to raise money. One plan was to breed horses to serve as remounts for the French army. Most of the ranchers kept cows, and there were sheep on the ranches of the Comte de Soras, Comte de Beaudrap and M. de Wolf. Marquis de Jumilhac had pure-bred rams and ewes sent from Shropshire and the Oxford Downs. His impressive home overlooking the valley was named 'Richelieu Manor' for his ancestral home. The staircase was built on the same scale as his home in France, and wide enough for a carriage and team.

Comte de Seyssel, an artist, bought a house in Whitewood and there he accepted Elsie, the oldest of the Guerin children, as his pupil. They would often go on painting and sketching expeditions together and Elsie under his direction became a talented artist.

After several years, the Comte de Soras gave up his sheep ranch and moved into Whitewood where he opened a college. There he became engaged to Elsie who had grown up to be a lovely-looking young woman with thick red-gold hair. When he sent word to his mother the Countess, in France, that he planned to marry a Canadian girl, she ordered him home. If he did not obey immediately, she would cut off his income. He returned to France and when Elsie married an Englishman, he arrived back in Whitewood. By then gold-rush fever was sweeping the country and he, de Wolf, and the Marquis de Jumilhac raced off to the Yukon to seek their fortunes.

Many people today visualize the lives of pioneers as a long grind of manual labour and hardship, and this would be true to some degree. But there were some, such as the French Counts and the well-to-do English families of Cannington Manor, who had a

John Francis Guerin, on the left, with members of the Guerin Dramatic Company.

background of wealth and culture and whose interests in life included literature, music and art. They rode to the hounds, entertained at elegant dinner parties and balls and enjoyed theatrical entertainment.

There was a place in the new towns for the talents of Angelica and Francis Guerin and indeed for all of their five children. The theatrical company they formed produced professional entertainment which included the plays of Shakespeare, Dickens, and Molière. Angelica gave readings and recitations. Her daughter May, who had been taught the violin by Marquis de Jumilhac, contributed to the recitals. The Marquis wished to marry May, but he was many years older and she had fallen in love with a charming, good-looking Irishman, the son of Sir Henry Stokes. After their marriage, they moved to Regina where she was the first violinist in the Regina Symphony Orchestra.

My grandparents suffered many hardships in the early years. They did not have the fortunes that the French Counts had behind them, and they worked hard in surroundings that were very different than those they had left. But with gaiety and fortitude they overcame their difficulties, and their children grew up, busy and happy. They and the French Counts with whom they shared those early years, undoubtedly contributed a colourful page to the history of Canada.◆

THE POLAR ESKIMOS

By Fred Bruemmer

THE ANCESTORS of the Inuit came to North America from Asia about 8,000 years ago, at a time when the Bering land bridge which once connected the continents had probably already vanished beneath the rising sea. From Alaska they moved eastward across the harsh but game-rich Arctic, reaching Greenland about 2000 B.C. From these people of the Arctic Small Tool Tradition, peoples of the Dorset Culture evolved in the Eastern Arctic about 800 B.C., spreading west nearly to the Mackenzie Delta and east to Greenland.

This culture held sway over much of the Arctic for nearly 2,000 years. It was finally displaced or absorbed by a new wave from the west. Starting about 800 A.D., people of the Thule Culture (so called because of artifacts found near Thule, Greenland) began to move eastward from Alaska. In less than three centuries they had overrun the entire Arctic, from Alaska to East Greenland, from northernmost Greenland to southern Labrador. They were superb sea-mammal hunters; their daring specialty was to pursue the mighty bowhead whales.

Around 1200 A.D. the climate began to deteriorate. Winters became longer and colder, summers shorter and cooler. The ice cover of the arctic seas increased; the whales began to avoid these ice-choked waters. Bereft of one of their major sources of food, the people left the far-north islands and northernmost Greenland, or died out.

Only one small group remained, the Polar Eskimos of north-western Greenland. For eons this region had been both bridge and oasis. Here people of various succeeding cultures had crossed from Ellesmere to Greenland. But here, too, people had settled and hunted, because the area was exceptionally rich in game, a veritable Eskimo Eden.

While all the other people of the farthest north vanished, as the onset of the Little Ice Age made living and hunting conditions intolerably hard, the Polar Eskimos, a minuscule group in a vast land, persisted. Their realm was bounded by ice: the mighty Humboldt Glacier to the north, a nearly 200-mile stretch of glittering ice pouring like an immense, slow-motion avalanche into Melville Bay in the south; the glacier-capped coast of Ellesmere to the west. They lived on a narrow, mostly barren strip of land along a sea frozen ten months of the year and directly behind them rose *sermerssuaq* — the giant glacier, the two-mile thick ice-cap of Greenland.

This may not sound like everyone's idea of Paradise, but it had its compensations. The expanse of open sea known as the North Water, now about twice the size of Lake Superior but then, due to the severity of that climatic period probably somewhat smaller, lapped virtually onto the doorstep of the Polar Eskimos, a sea rich in white whales, narwhal, walrus and seals. In summer, the vast scree slopes of the region swarmed with millions of dovekies. On small islands near shore, eider ducks nested in thousands. Steep cliffs were home to a myriad of murres. Arctic hares were numerous; the lakes full of char; the leads in spring provided Greenland halibut; caribou were common in many valleys; muskoxen wandered across the land; and polar bears roamed the ice.

Oddly enough, for a people so totally dependent upon the hunt, the Polar Eskimos lost during this period of isolation three implements one might consider vital to their survival: the leister, the bow and arrow, and the kayak. The leister, a three-pronged spear, was essential for char fishing. Without it, the Polar Eskimos became incapable of exploiting one of the rich resources of their region. The loss of the bow and arrow eliminated caribou hunting, an important food and an even more important source of pelts ideally suited for winter clothing. Without kayaks sea-mammal hunting was severely curtailed. For centuries all that remained were the names of these mythical implements, once known and owned, but since forgotten.

Forgotten, too, was the existence of other people. Their legends spoke of men who had once lived in lands near and far. But that was *aglani, aglani* — long, long ago — in a remote, nearly fairy-tale-like period. Now there were no other people, just the 200-odd Polar Eskimos, scattered in small groups along several hundred miles of coast, in a land surrounded by ice. They considered themselves to be the only people on earth.

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the British Navy had ships and men to spare and, prodded by Sir

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Fred Bruemmer of Montreal has travelled, photographed and written about the arctic regions of the world for two decades. His books include 'The Arctic', 'Seasons of the Eskimo' and 'Encounters with Arctic Animals'.

Hidden behind a white shield a hunter in spring crawls towards a seal sleeping in the sun.

Polar Eskimos gaff Greenland halibut from a lead.

Joseph Banks, president of the prestigious Royal Society, decided to embark upon another quest, the Northwest Passage. In the spring of 1818 two ships, the sloop *Isabella* and the brig *Alexander*, under the command of Captain John Ross sailed for Greenland. They were provisioned for 26 months and carried a lavish, if somewhat odd assortment of gifts for any far-north natives they might encounter: it included 15 pounds vermilion paint, 102 pounds snuff, 13 cases of beads and cowrie shells, and 40 umbrellas. As interpreter they had John Sacheuse along, a native of the Disko Bay region in Greenland, a highly-gifted man, fluent in several Greenland dialects, an adventurer, artist, and visionary, who had come to England to study art and the scriptures.

Ross rammed his ships through the Middle Ice, and reached the North Water in late July.

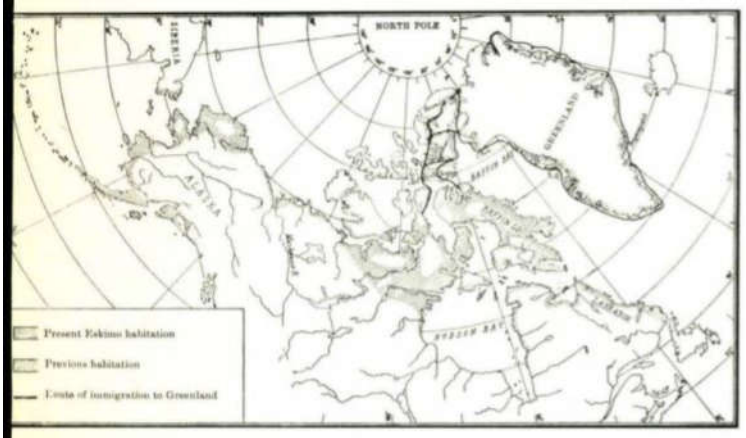
On 8 August 1818, in northern Melville Bay, Ross saw men on the ice. The Polar Eskimos had been discovered — a people, Captain Edward Sabine noted 'so entirely . . . insulated from all communication, that we found them ignorant . . . that there were other people in the world than themselves, or other

places than the spot they occupied.'

Not surprisingly, the first emotions of the Polar Eskimos were those of fear. 'The appearance of the ships terrified them exceedingly, in the supposition that they were supernatural; that they were animals sent from the sun or moon to destroy them.' They mistook the ships' great sails for wings and thought they had flown down to earth.

Slowly Sacheuse's diplomacy, fortified by gifts,

A map published in 'Greenland by the Polar Sea' by Knud Rasmussen, shows areas of early Eskimo habitation and the route of migration to Greenland.



allayed the Polar Eskimos' dread, and a few were persuaded to come aboard ship. 'Their astonishment was unbounded.' Here there was mystery and wealth beyond the wildest dreams of mortals, and they reacted to it with a touching mixture of awe and avarice. When shown a magnifying mirror, they instantly looked behind it to find the monster that distorted their features. They marvelled at glass as 'ice' that does not melt, but any food offered them, such as biscuits and salt meat, 'they spat out in disgust'.

For people living in a land where the only metal was meteoric iron, brittle and hard to work, and where even a small piece of driftwood constituted a treasure, the abundance of wood and iron aboard ship made it a sort of floating Fort Knox. Greed, occasionally, exceeded discretion. One man tried to abscond with a spare mast; another had a crack at hauling away the armourer's huge anvil.

Ross sailed on to explore the coasts of Baffin Bay and failed to find the entrance to the Northwest Passage. But his voyage opened the way to the whale-rich North Water and whalers eagerly followed his lead. Soon between 40 and 100 ships sailed to the North Water annually, arriving with such regularity, the Polar Eskimos called them *upernagdlit*, the bringers of spring.

As in other regions of the Arctic, the whalers also brought more deadly gifts, diseases to which the long-isolated people had no immunity. In 1830, twelve years after Ross, whalers landing near Cape York discovered some huts. In them 'grouped around an oilless lamp, in the attitudes of life, were four or five human corpses.' Since there was food in the huts it was assumed that 'an epidemic had stricken them. Some three or four huts that were near had the same melancholy furniture of extinct life.'

It is thought that before their discovery the Polar Eskimos numbered about 200. Contact with outsiders and their diseases quickly decimated them. When the American explorer Elisha Kent Kane visited the region in 1855, the total Polar Eskimo population had sunk to 140. Six years later when the explorer Isaac Israel Hayes counted them only 100 were left. In 1873, Dr Bessels, scientist on the Charles Francis Hall expedition, found their number risen to 112. But between the time of Hayes and Bessels, the Polar Eskimo population had been swelled by members of the last of the great Eskimo migrations.

Around 1860, famine struck the people of northern Baffin Island. Seal hunting failed. Caribou had vanished. It was then that Kritlaq, the most famed shaman of the area, had a vision. 'Far to the north' he announced 'in a region rich in animals, other Inuit live. There is food in plenty. Let us go there.' (If one doubts visions, one may assume that Kritlaq had heard about the Polar Eskimos and their land from whalers who at that time visited both regions.)

Many responded to Kritlaq's call. They travelled north for four years, camping in summer in game-rich areas, continuing their search for the promised land in winter. The old shaman, so Eskimo legends tell, led them through the polar night, an aureole of flames surrounding his head. (To prove that there is truth in this belief, the people point out that his descendants tend to be bald, something exceedingly rare among Eskimos.)

They reached the land of the Polar Eskimos in 1864 and were received with respect, and with gratitude because they brought three gifts: the kayak, the leister, and bow and arrow, those vital hunting tools whose use the Polar Eskimos had forgotten. Bows and arrows have long since been replaced by guns, the leister by more efficient nets, but the kayaks used to this day by the Polar Eskimos show a mixture of Baffin Island and Greenland designs. And many of today's most respected Polar Eskimo families claim descent from the immigrants who sledged with such faith to their land from Baffin Island, a bond reinforced in recent years by mutual visits.

To Robert Peary, the Polar Eskimos were indispensable allies in his single-minded quest for the North Pole and the 'final and complete solution of the Polar mystery.' They were his mentors in the art of arctic travelling; the men accompanied his expeditions and the women made arctic clothing for the expedition members. It was four Polar Eskimos

Captain John Ross meets the Polar Eskimos, August 1818.

and Peary's black servant Matthew Henson who accompanied him on his first dash to the Pole. To Peary the pole was 'the prize of three centuries. My dream and goal for twenty years. Mine at last!' The more pragmatic Polar Eskimos saw *kalalerssuaq* — the big navel — as *kingmersoriartorfigssuak* — the place where one only eats dogs.

For twenty years Peary had paid the Polar Eskimos for their services in guns, ammunition, and other southern goods. The void his departure in 1909 created, was filled the following year by the establishment of a trading post by the brilliant young Danish (Greenland-born) ethnologist Knud Rasmussen and his friend Peter Freuchen. They set up shop near the great gable-shaped mountain of Umanak and, with a fine flair for the dramatic, called the place Thule, the ancient Greek-Roman name for the utmost bounds of the habitable world. They had, wrote Freuchen, 'little money and little goods'; they trapped and 'lived the Eskimo way by hunting, and never did we have a happier, more carefree time.'

Rasmussen's reasons for establishing Thule were twofold: to supply the Polar Eskimos with those southern goods upon which they had become dependent and to forestall the territorial ambitions of other nations in this region in favour of Denmark, since the area, legally speaking, was still *terra nullius*. It did not come under Danish rule until 1937, four years after Rasmussen's death. (During his lifetime, Thule, in a way, was his unchallenged fiefdom. Rasmussen even minted his own coins.)

From Thule Rasmussen carried out scientific work among the Polar Eskimos; it also served as a physical and in part financial base for his Thule expeditions. On the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-1924) he travelled, mostly by dog team, from Greenland to Alaska, with a detour into Siberia. One of his companions, Qaivigarssuaq, (Rasmussen called him Miteq — the eider duck), now in his 70s and still a fine hunter, smiled reminiscently when I asked him about this immense journey. 'It was a fine trip' he said in typical Polar Eskimo understatement.

The Polar Eskimos love to travel. A few decades ago two men, Karkutsiaq and Massanguaq, sledged from Thule to the north tip of Ellesmere Island, then south to Devon Island and home again, a tour of more than 4,000 kilometers. 'Just for fun' they explained to the Danish teacher at Thule who wondered why they had made the trip. The Polar Eskimos, Rasmussen and Freuchen were of a fibre. 'Give me winter, give me dogs, and you can have the rest,' Rasmussen wrote.

In 1951, the Polar Eskimos were still very isolated, their only brief contact with the outside world the visit of the annual supply ship. That summer an armada of ships arrived at North Star Bay. The Americans had come to build the giant Thule Air Base. To the Polar Eskimos it was part miracle, part nightmare. 'Ships came and planes and more planes. And people. So

The Polar Eskimos consider that dog teams are more reliable and more economical than the snowmobiles that are now widely used in the Canadian Arctic.

many people. We had never seen so many people. They wanted to buy everything: our clothes, our tools, walrus tusks, narwhal tusks, kayak models. And all the things that were of great value to us meant nothing to them. And one could no longer sleep. Just as you fell asleep "boom", there went another explosion', a Polar Eskimo woman, Sofie Arnapalâq recalled. Some of the Polar Eskimos who had gone north in spring to hunt found, upon their return in late fall, a full-fledged military town on the broad, flat peninsula they used to call *Pitufiq* — the place where one leaves boats.

There were 302 Polar Eskimos in 1951. Within months, they were joined by thousands (more than 10,000 at one time) of American servicemen. This traumatic invasion could have doomed them and it is greatly to the credit of American and Danish authorities that this did not happen. The base area was off limits to the Eskimos; the servicemen were not permitted to leave the base. But after a year, the Polar Eskimos, fed up with the eternal noise of the base and the screech of planes, moved 120 miles north, to the village of Qânâq, taking with them their meagre possessions and the magic name of Thule so that Qânâq today is officially called Thule.

The Polar Eskimos were always a people apart. They still are. While their 42,000 fellow inhabitants of the island call themselves *Kalatdlit* (Greenlanders), the 600 Polar Eskimos refer to themselves by the same name used by Eskimos across Canada and Alaska, *Inuit*, or occasionally, as if to emphasize the uniqueness of their history and their position as the world's northernmost people, they use the name *Inugssuit*, the great people.

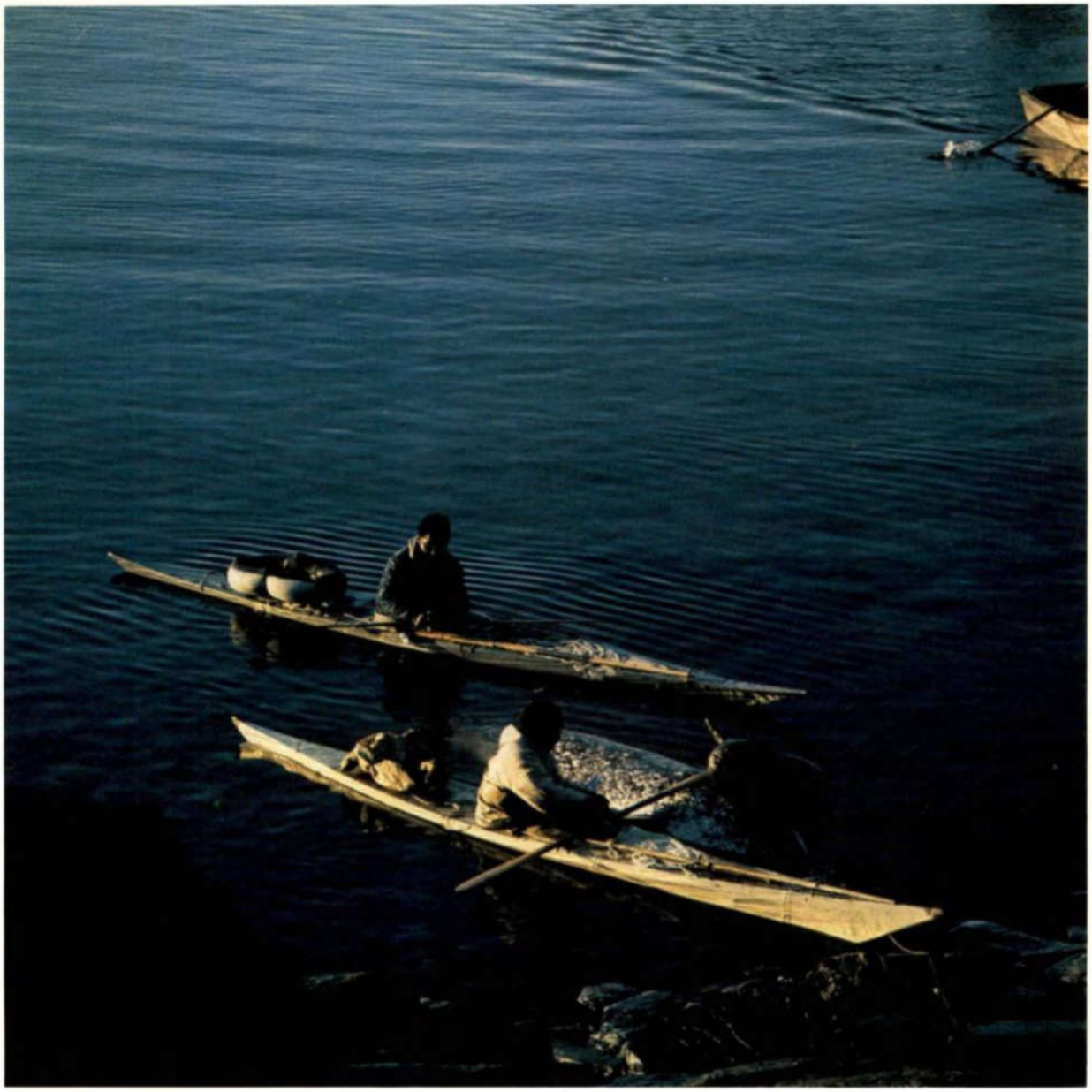
They live in six widely-spaced settlements, from Siorapaluk in the north, the world's northernmost

Polar Eskimo women sew a sealskin cover for a new kayak.

village, to Savigsivik, facing Melville Bay in the south. During the many months I spent with them, I was impressed by their concern for finding a viable continuation of their traditional hunting culture, by their courtesy and hospitality, and by the incredible hardiness and vitality of the older people.

Members of the Kommunerâd, the district council composed of elected representatives from the six Polar Eskimo communities, have passed many local ordinances aimed at enhancing hunting success while, at the same time, preserving vital game resources.

Snowmobiles, now nearly universally used by Eskimos in Canada and Alaska, were outlawed. The reasons: too noisy, too expensive, too dangerous on



Hunters return to camp with a narwhal. The heads of fiords where the narwhal and white whales congregate in summer are closed to motorized boats.

sea ice criss-crossed by leads. Dogs are more reliable, more economical and, in this region where bulk game animals (walrus, white whale and narwhal) are common, easy to keep and feed. The heads of fiords where narwhal and white whale congregate in summer are closed to all motorized boats. Only men in silent kayaks may hunt there. To minimize loss through sinking, narwhal must be harpooned before they are shot. To avoid disturbance and consequent egg loss, no guns may be fired in the vicinity of murre colonies. No nets may be set in or near a river used by migrating char.

The Kommunerâd has also grappled imaginatively with one of the north's most pressing problems, alcohol abuse. Every resident, Inuit, Dane or visitor is given a liquor book with thirty monthly points, entitling him to buy thirty bottles of beer, or one bottle of whisky and six bottles of beer. In theory this should be stretched over the entire month. In practice nearly everyone draws the entire ration on the first day of each month, the whole place goes on a monumental binge, is hung-over, sour and contrite the following day, and then follow 28 days of total sobriety and peace. A few belong to the *blå kors* (Blue Cross), a sort of Arctic Alcoholics Anonymous, and never touch liquor. They are a small, but growing, minority.

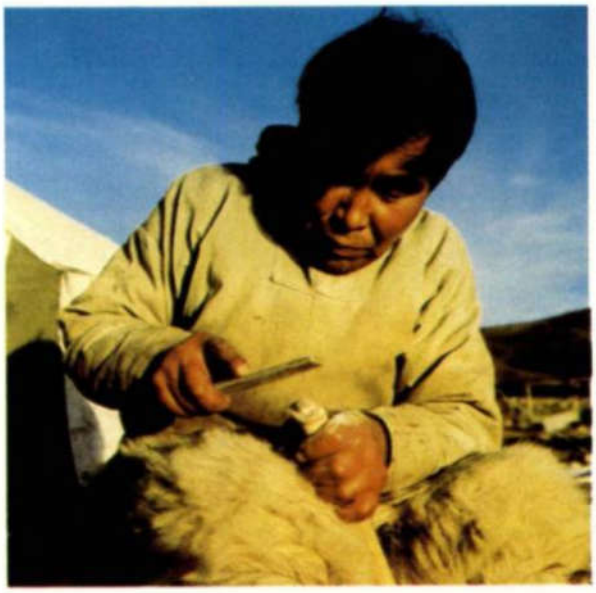
Hunting remains the basis of the Polar Eskimo economy and although wage-employed people

Carrying guns and harpoons, hunters walk to the floe edge. Their pants of polar bear skin are worth, at today's prices for pelts, about $1,000.

probably earn more money, their social standing and prestige is decidedly inferior to that of the great hunters. The hunters may not be rich in cash, but they are usually rich in food and they still take pride and pleasure in sharing this wealth, as they did more than a century ago, when Kane wrote that Polar Eskimos 'exist in love and community of resources as a single family.' The best hunters are still respectfully known as the 'large-handed men', men so skilful and successful, they gather from land and sea such an abundance of food they not only provide amply for their own families but also for others who are less fortunate.

They take justifiable pride in their skill and courage. In early spring I travelled with an Eskimo couple to the floe edge, the limit of land-fast ice, near Narssaq, some 60 miles from Thule. We waited for seal and whales to surface within shooting distance, but had no luck. It was humid, cold and windy. In traditional Polar Eskimo fashion, they had no food along. That would have shown a lack of faith in their ability to live off the land. We waited for a day and a night, and another day and another night. They had no tent. That, too, these 'iron men' (as Kane called them) consider superfluous. We took turns sleeping on the sled, the Eskimos impervious to cold in their traditional clothes.

Aleqasinguaq wore her fox-fur parka, warm and elegant; pert little fox-fur pants; hip-high, pure-white sealskin boots fringed at the top with the long, silver-



Filing away, a Polar Eskimo makes the articulated joint of a lance.

Hunters use their dog teams to haul a walrus onto the ice near Northumberland Sound.

glistening mane fur of a polar bear, and inner boots made of down-soft arctic hare fur. A layer of dried grass between inner and outer boot provided near-perfect insulation. Inuteq wore his *kulitaq*, a caribou-skin parka; the distinctive Polar Eskimo *nanut* — pants made of polar bear skin, warm, waterproof and exceedingly strong and worth, at today's prices for polar pelts, about $1,000 — and outer boots of sealskin and inner boots of hare. 'In this well-ventilated costume the man will sleep upon his sledge with the atmosphere 93° below our freezing point', Kane observed more than a century ago.

Disappointed by the lack of game, the two Eskimos decided to travel to another floe-edge area. To reach it, we had to cross a wide belt of chaotically heaved-up ice floes in the tidal zone and then make our way around a cape on an ice foot, a slanting, slippery, fairly narrow strip of ice, with the sheer rock cliff on one side and open water far beneath on the other. Inuteq guided the heavy sled with superb skill over and around the ice floes. On the ice foot, Aleqasinguaq went ahead, calling the badly-frightened dogs, and Inuteq pushed and held the sled, preventing it from slipping off the ice slope. We reached the new ice fields, hunted there with better luck, returned on that treacherous ice foot, now with a heavily loaded sled, crossed the pressure ice and sledged the 60 miles back to Thule, Inuteq often running to guide the sled through rough ice. It was a perfectly routine Polar Eskimo hunting trip, but I was nevertheless considerably impressed. Inuteq was then 75 years old.

Floe-edge hunting is tame compared with another traditional Polar Eskimo pursuit, the 'thin-ice' hunt of walrus. For this they travel north, to the walrus-rich region of Neqê, which, significantly, in their dialect means 'food'. They take their dog teams as far as the floe edge and then continue on foot across the new-formed ice stretching out over the Neqê Bank which is rich in shellfish. The ice is so thin, walrus can easily smash through it with their thick-padded heads. The Eskimos slither cautiously across the rubbery ice, in places only an inch or two thick, wait near the holes a walrus has made, harpoon the animal when it surfaces, and ram a steel or ivory-tipped pole through the looped end of the harpoon line into the ice, to hold the caught and enraged one-ton animal. When it surfaces to breathe they kill it with guns. But the walrus can see the hunter's dark form through the thin ice. It may surface beneath him, shattering the ice, and then the hunter becomes the hunted and is lucky if he escapes with his life. They nearly invariably do because, as Kane noted when he watched with amazement and admiration the great-great grandparents of today's hunters at the same spot: 'The movement of the walrus and the condition of the ice seem to be known to them by a kind of instinct.'

At Thule the feasts following the confirmation ceremony in May are the social events of the year.

April, in the Polar Eskimo dialect, is called *Arkajuerssuak*, the month when 'the sun is warm'. Most people who have not spent January and February at Thule, when the average temperature is -29° F. would fail to regard a Thule April, sun or no sun, as warm. In fact, the average temperature of only one month, July, is above the freezing point. But May, the month 'when the dovekies return' is quite pleasant, and it is in May that by tradition confirmation is held.

The confirmands are decked out in brand-new Polar Eskimo finery: the boys in white *anoråks* — and glistening polar bear pants, the girls in scarlet *anoråks* and shiny new sealskin boots which, since they bend only little at the knee, give Polar Eskimo women their distinctive, perforce rather stiff-legged walk. After the church ceremony (the Polar Eskimos, like nearly all Greenlanders, are Lutheran), the parents of these children hold open house. It is the great feast of the year. It is also a time of considerable social one-upmanship. There is still an enormous amount of prestige attached to providing the most lavish spread. In this contest the wage-employed fare badly. They may be better off in material goods, but when it comes to fancy foods, they simply cannot compete with the hunters.

They certainly try. They buy the best the local Royal Greenland Trade Department store has to offer. Some order goodies from southern Greenland, even from Denmark. They bake fabulous cakes. There are dates from Iraq and confections from Paris, excellent coffee in lovely cups, and the best cigars money can buy. Yet their guests remain only as long as courtesy demands. It is at the homes of the great hunters that the people linger. And some of the hunters go to extraordinary trouble to provide feasts that will long be remembered.

The year I was in Thule, one hunter served fresh caribou to all who came. This may seem like nothing special except for the fact that there are no caribou in the Thule area. They died out a long time ago, victims of adverse weather and overhunting. This hunter, in anticipation of the confirmation feast for his son, had sledged the previous fall across the ice cap to Inglefield Land, an extremely dangerous and difficult round trip of about 500 miles. There he found caribou, shot four, brought them back and kept them, deep-frozen, in an ice cave. He was gone for nearly six weeks. And now he treated his astounded and delighted guests to fresh caribou, with that modest nonchalance demanded by Polar Eskimo etiquette.

Other hunters offered equally tempting though more exotic treats: *mattak*, raw narwhal skin, crunchy, hazel-nut flavoured and extremely rich in vitamin C; *iterssoraq*, year-old narwhal tail, slowly fermented in a blubber-lined rock cache, the skin bright green, the

blubber olive green, the meat black, greenishly marbled, with the taste of the different parts ranging roughly from Brie, to Roquefort, to strong Stilton; and, best loved by all, *kiviak*, dovekies preserved for a year under rocks in a blubber-lined sealskin bag, until they had the pungent flavour of old Gorgonzola.

The tides of change are gnawing away at Thule's remarkably preserved hunting culture. Young men, after finishing school, leave for wage-employment in southern Greenland, or even Denmark. Young girls who, only a generation ago, dreamed of marrying a great hunter, are now more likely to dream of a Danish plumber and a suburban home. Until recently, the Polar Eskimos seemed able to absorb outside influence and 'progress', and adapt both to their hunting culture. The high price of sealskins, narwhal tusks, walrus ivory and mattak (an expensive and much-desired delicacy in southern Greenland) has helped them to keep roughly in step materially with those who work for wages. The hunters have an independence and freedom which they cherish. But to the young, the city lights beckon. Girls pore for hours over glossy Danish fashion magazines. Cutting up seals, to them, is not an alluring prospect.

Thus the future of the Polar Eskimos, the world's northernmost people, and of their hunting culture, rooted in tradition and so attuned to the exigencies of their harsh land, hangs in tenuous balance. ◆

A grandmother in traditional dress takes her grandson out for a walk in Thule.

Drying narwhal sinew to be used as thread.

Women selling sealskins at the Royal Greenland Trade Department store in Siorapaluk.

Pine bough in an Ontario wood.

Rain

"Life, believe, is not a dream
So dark as sages say;
Oft a little morning rain
Foretells a pleasant day"

Charlotte Brontë

Trees in the rain, Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Tail lights in Toronto traffic.

Photographs by John de Visser

White Bay, Newfoundland.

Saint John, New Brunswick.

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Fort Vancouver as it appeared in 1845, the year Kanaka William arrived to be chaplain to the Hawaiians employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Water-colour by an unknown artist.

KANAKA WILLIAM

By Yvonne Mearns Klan

Yvonne Klan of North Vancouver, B.C., has published several articles dealing with the history of the Pacific Northwest.

KANAKA WILLIAM'S PRESENCE drifts like a ghost through the chronicles of Fort Vancouver. Old journals kept by visitors to the fort record the novelty of a Hawaiian chaplain and congregation on the banks of the Columbia, and faded maps recall the existence of an 'Owhyhee Church' within the fort's stockades. For a brief period Kanaka William became the central figure in an international dispute which hastened Fort Vancouver's closure, but in spite of his fleeting appearance on the international scene little is known about the Hawaiian chaplain. The few threads of his existence are scattered through archives in Manitoba, British Columbia, Oregon and Hawaii, and have never been woven together.

Kanaka William and the hundreds of Hawaiians who served in the fur trade never rose to historical prominence, so their colourful and important contribution to the development of the trade has generally been overlooked in accounts of the era. The earliest maritime traders, bound for the fur-rich shores of the Pacific Northwest, took aboard Hawaiians to replenish crews which had been depleted by scurvy, accidents and desertions. Russian fur traders recruited Hawaiians to work in remote Alaska outposts. In 1811 the Pacific Fur Company relied on Hawaiian labour to build Astoria, the first establishment on the Columbia. When Astoria was taken over by the North West Company the tradition of using Hawaiian labourers was maintained.

The harsh and rugged life of the fur trade took its toll. Men froze in subzero winters, drowned in turbulent rivers, succumbed to disease and injury, or were slain by hostile Indians; and the traders were hard pressed to find new men to replace those who had died or deserted. Native Indians were employed where feasible but they were accustomed to seasonal work habits and had neither the inclination nor motivation for the drudgery of steady labour around the forts; nor could their loyalty be depended upon in the event of Indian-white conflicts. The traders therefore turned to the Hawaiian Islands for the cheapest, most accessible source of manpower.

The Hawaiians were found to be willing workers, docile and honest, and excellent boatmen. They were considered to lack the qualities of leadership but this deficiency was offset by their loyalty — an important consideration when isolated outposts were surrounded and outnumbered by unpredictable native Indians. Another advantage in hiring Hawaiians was their willingness to accept only food and clothing for wages.

The 1821 merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company brought about many changes in the Pacific fur trade, but the Hawaiians' wages remained constant. Governor George Simpson conceded that the Islanders were useful for 'common drudgery' and were 'valuable in establishing new Countries as they can be depended on in cases of danger from the natives', but otherwise he had a low opinion of their abilities and maintained that food and clothing were 'sufficient recompense for all the services they render'. Nonetheless, in 1824 the Company awarded them a salary of £17 a year — the minimum wage for servants of the lowest rank. Other employees resented the Hawaiians' elevation to salaried status, 'and very naturally so' proclaimed Simpson, 'as they are by no means such serviceable people.' The contentious salary was therefore reduced to £10 a year and this, reported Simpson, 'satisfies all parties'.

It is debatable that the Hawaiians actually gained by receiving a salary. Reverend Herbert Beaver, the Company's chaplain at Fort Vancouver, reported that each Hawaiian

> before embarkation in their own country, received a small advance of money, part of which their chiefs seize as a bonus for permitting them to have it . . . The remainder is usually squandered; so that when they arrive in a colder climate they are destitute of adequate clothing, the supply of which generally consumed the whole of their wages for the first year. Nor are they afterwards able to save much of these, for all their necessaries are charged at the rate of 100 per cent. . .

Beaver was a relentless (and, at times, inaccurate) critic of the Company's Columbia operations. He strongly protested the use of corporal punishment, and maintained that the Hawaiians' condition

> is little better than that of slavery, being subject to all the imperious treatment which their employers may think fit to lay on them, whether by flogging, imprisonment or otherwise, without a possibility of obtaining redress.

Why did the Hawaiians leave their sun-blessed islands for the cold and rain-swept north? And, when their contracts had expired, why did many elect to re-engage rather than to return to their homeland?

Initially, adventure and the lure of distant lands enticed many young men and women away from the Islands. Some eventually rose to positions which carried more prestige than they could ever hope to attain if they returned to Hawaii. Even with their meagre salary many could earn more by working in the Columbia District than they could by working in the Islands. Those who were thrifty enough to save money returned home relatively wealthy men; those less frugal were ashamed to return empty-handed and wanted another chance to 'make good' in America. If the Company's discipline was sometimes severe, it was no worse than that inflicted by short-tempered foremen in Hawaii. The sandalwood trade was particularly notorious for its brutal treatment of workers.

Many Hawaiians along the coast acquired Indian wives, had children, and were unwilling to abandon these ties. Those who manned the dismal and lonely little forts upcoast had to obtain permission from a senior officer to take an Indian wife, and often this

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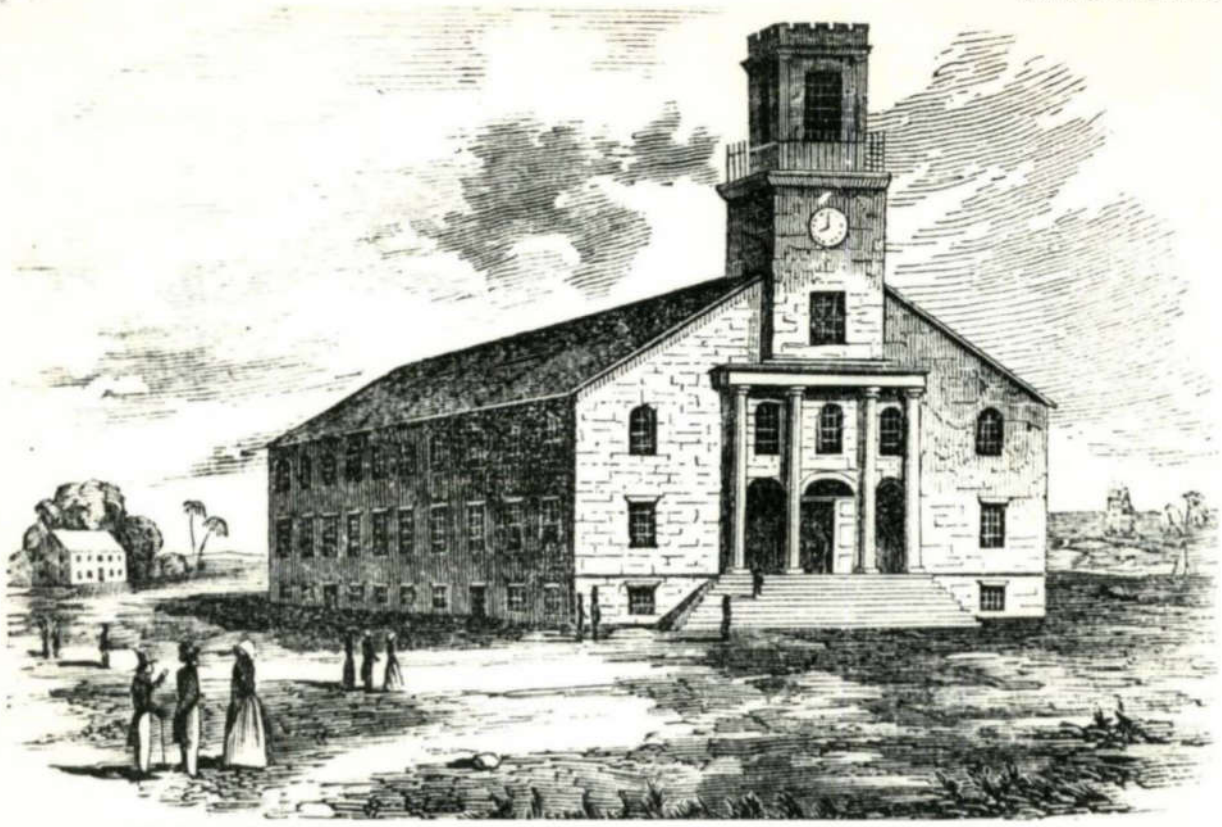
Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu



Kawaiahao, the first church established in Honolulu, as it appeared in 1847. Kanaka William was a member of this church before his departure for the Columbia District.

permission was granted only if the man re-engaged for a further two-year period. Other Islanders were reluctant to trade the comparatively easy-going life on the Columbia for the oppressive missionary regime in Hawaii where gambling, working on Sunday, and drunkenness were indictable offences, and any hint of sexual misconduct was severely punished.

Perhaps it was the Hawaiians' gleeful response to Fort Vancouver's free-wheeling society which prompted Chief Factor McLoughlin, in 1844, to request the Company's Honolulu agents 'to search out a trusty educated Hawaiian of good character to read the scriptures and assemble his people for public worship.' The candidate would also be required to serve as a teacher and interpreter. His salary would be £10 per annum. 'This is not a very large salary' noted the Honolulu newspaper *Ka Elele*, 'because necessities are very expensive there.'

McLoughlin's request was passed on to Dr G. P. Judd, one of Hawaii's foremost missionaries, who quickly responded:

> . . . Wm. R. Kaulehelehe is the Teacher whom I have procured to go to the Columbia . . . His wife accompanies him. Although not as well qualified as the person at first selected, I hesitate not to give him a good character and high recommendation as a faithful, industrious Skilful Teacher, and in regular standing as a member of the church.
>
> He will be competent to act as Chaplain to the Hawaiians in the Columbia.
>
> Mary S. Kaai, his wife, is highly recommended to me . . . and I have no doubt will prove herself useful.

The Hawaiian couple arrived at Fort Vancouver on 23 June 1845, and from this time William R. Kaulehelehe became known as Kanaka William. 'Kanaka' derives from the Hawaiian word for man, *kane*, and became the popular term for 'Hawaiian.' Thus Kanaka Creek, Kanaka Flats, Owyhee River, Kanaka Falls and Kanaka Bar commemorate Hawaiian pioneers in the Pacific Northwest, and many frontier settlements had a 'Kanaka Row'.

At Fort Vancouver the chaplain and his wife were lodged in the Kanaka section of the village, a boisterous little community beside the fort where the Company's employees of lower rank — Iroquois, Scottish, Hawaiian, French and Métis — lived with their Indian wives and families. The officers lived within the fort with their families.

To their dismay, William and Mary were given a hostile reception by the Hawaiian community, who feared that the new chaplain had come to curtail the freedom and pleasures they had found on the Columbia. In a letter to Judd, William wrote:

> . . . during the days we were living with the Hawaiians there was much abuse, malicious speaking, a very few people loved us. I was

told by someone that they disliked us and I think the reason for it was because we wanted them to observe the Sabbath, because on that day they did their carpentering, horse riding, agriculturing, and the like.

Fortunately, a Mr Kakeleiki (probably James Douglas) learned of the tense situation in the Hawaiian community and moved William and Mary to a house inside the fort. William's letter continues:

. . . we were taken to the enclosure. We went and lived in the house furnished us and we are living comfortable and well. There is nothing wrong with us, we are being well taken care of.

William's letter supports Reverend Beaver's charges of excessive disciplinary measures, for he reported:

. . . the Hawaiians have repeatedly and daily asked me to see about their trouble of being repeatedly abused by the white people without any cause. They thought I had come as an officer to settle their difficulties. I said no, I did not come to do those things. I had no instructions from the king and ministers of the government of Hawaii to do those things. All that I have come for was the word of God and school. As for their difficulties I could not do anything, that is the duty of someone else. That is for the king and ministers to attend. So I told them, but they were not satisfied. They told me that this trouble was at Walamaka [Willamette?] and they almost have a riot. . .

The new chaplain seemed poorly equipped to deal with the enormous challenge facing him. When his parishioners turned to him for leadership and advice he denied them — a move which surely did little to lessen their initial antipathy towards him.

Indeed, William's actions fulfilled the Hawaiian community's gloomiest forebodings. His first task was to work towards a decorous observance of the Sabbath, and in this endeavour he was able to report some small success:

. . . there is a little order on Sundays now, not like former times when there was much disturbance. Men and women have attended the two meetings on each Sunday. But on account of daily labor we have not found time to conduct school and meeting. We thought of conducting a school at night but can't because the nights are short.

William's next task was to instil the habit of sobriety among his parishioners, and here he was less successful. Reverend Atkinson visited Fort Vancouver in 1848 and commented on the Hawaiian chaplain and his recalcitrant congregation:

This is a striking fact that a converted heathen has left his country and become a christian missionary to his countrymen abroad. He sustains a good reputation. Has not been ordained. Has no church and few members. Has from twenty to forty hearers, every Sabbath. Has much difficulty to keep them from drinking. In fact he brings in to Mr. Ogden a weekly report of those who drank on the week or Saturday previous. That of last week was six. The Hawaiians prove their tendencies to become beastly drunkards. They drink without mercy, buy it on Saturday and have Sabbath to get sober in so as to work on Monday. Some Americans bring it over and sell it clandestinely just below the fort to all classes. . .

In spite of the difficulties William faced, James Douglas, an officer of the Company, was satisfied with his work and stated that except for his ignorance of English, he was well qualified and 'seems to exercise a salutary influence on the minds of his countrymen'.

Royal Ontario Museum

John Coxe, a Hawaiian who spent some 40 years in the service of the Company. He ended his days at Fort Vancouver, where he was one of William's parishioners. Sketch by Paul Kane.

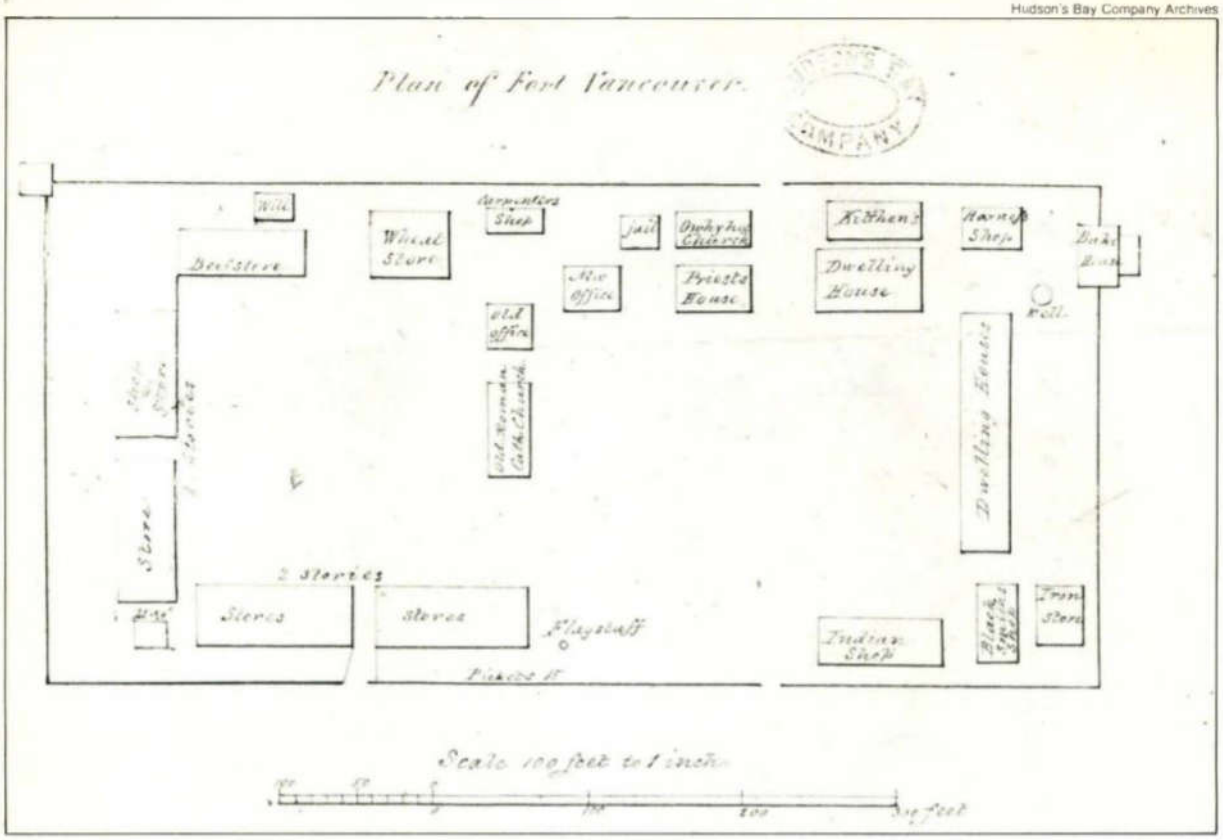
William's parishioners were the shepherds, gardeners, dairymen, sawmill workers and general labourers who worked on the Company's extensive holdings around Fort Vancouver. The Hawaiian temperance journal, *The Friend*, estimated that by 1844 three to four hundred Islanders were employed in the Columbia District. Many of these worked around Fort Vancouver, while others were employed on the Company's ships or at the isolated outposts up the coast: Forts Nisqually, Langley, Victoria, McLoughlin, Rupert, Simpson, Stikine and Taku.

In 1849 news of California's fabulous gold strikes spread along the coast. Gold fever raged like an epidemic, and men deserted families and employers to join the rush to the gold-fields. Gold fever infected the Hawaiians, too, and William's little congregation became even smaller. Reverend Damon of Honolulu visited Fort Vancouver in 1849 and noted:

Much to the credit of the company, it pays the salary of an Hawaiian preacher and school teacher. At the time of my visit he was labouring under serious hindrances, in consequence of so many of his countrymen leaving for the mines, and others becoming indifferent to religion. He accompanied me to visit an old *kanaka* who had been nearly forty years in the Company's service, during which period he had visited England. He said that he had been away from the Islands "three tens and nine years."

The 'old *kanaka*' was John Coxe.

Hudson's Bay Company Archives



'Plan of Fort Vancouver' by M. Vavasour, 1845, shows the 'Owhyhee' church near the north wall.

Defections caused by the gold rush were only one of the many problems facing Fort Vancouver. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 placed the Canadian-American boundary at 49° but allowed the Company 'possessory rights' to land it already occupied. What started out as a thin trickle of American settlers into the area turned into a surging flood of homesteaders who either settled on acreage which had been cleared and cultivated by the Company, or built on land claimed by native Indians. The inevitable conflicts between settlers and Indians gave rise to fears of a bloody, full-scale Indian uprising, so when the United States Army requested the Company's permission to establish a post adjacent to Fort Vancouver the Company agreed.

Relations between Company officials and United States Army officers were initially cordial but soon deteriorated when each side placed a different interpretation on the meaning of 'occupied land' and 'possessory rights.' Bit by bit the Company's holdings were pre-empted, which led one irate official to complain that since 1846, between squatters and concessions to the military, there remained 'but the wreck of our once flourishing settlement at Vancouver.' In 1846 the fort boasted 16 officers, 215 employees under articles of agreement, and a large number of Indian workers. By 1860 there were only about fourteen employees of all grades.

William's fortunes parallelled those of Fort Vancouver. The fort's drastically reduced holdings required fewer Hawaiian workers and William's diminished congregation was further reduced. His 'Owhyhee Church' was torn down sometime between 1855 and 1858 and was not replaced. At some point prior to 1850 William was moved from the fort to the less prestigious village.

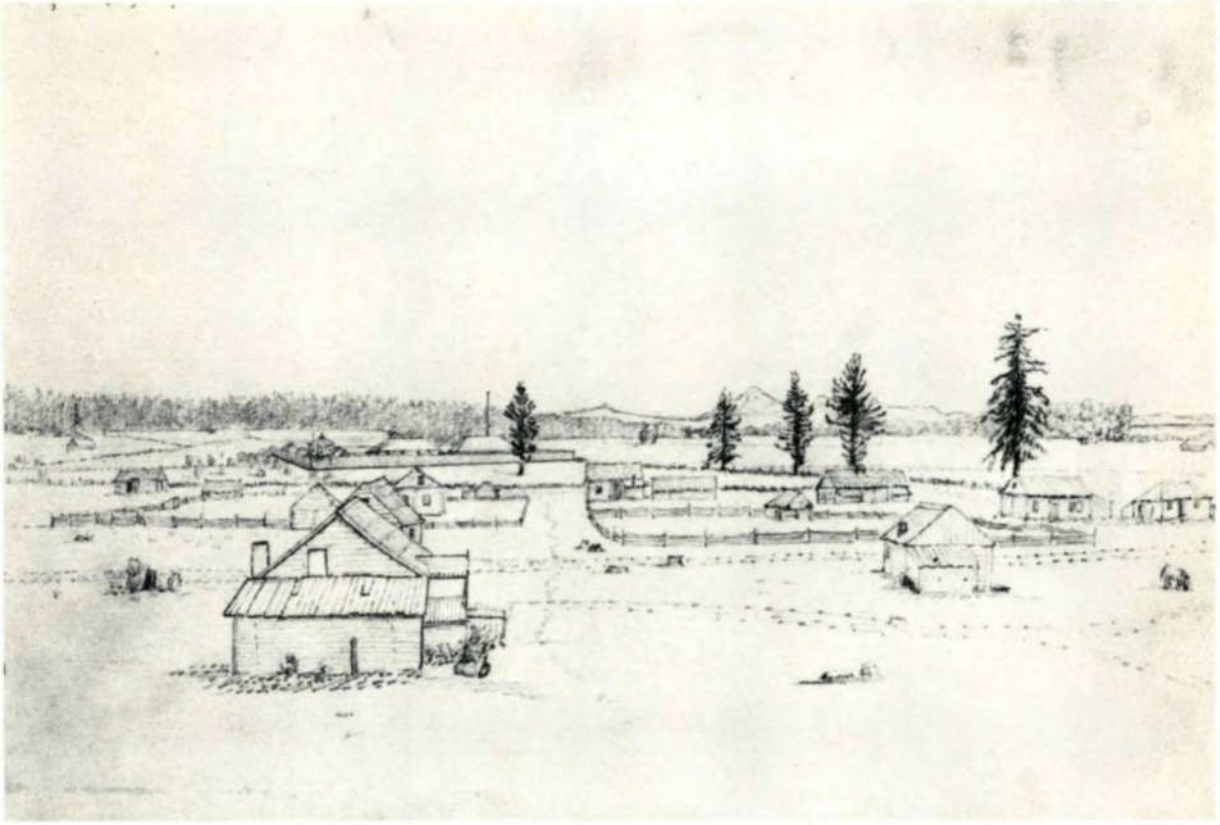
The village typified the disintegration of Fort Vancouver. The colourful, bustling community of the 1840s was virtually deserted by 1860. United States military officials considered the area was no longer 'occupied land' and decided it should be cleared out and put to more productive use. They appointed a board 'to examine and report upon the value of certain improvements on the military reserve, placed there by the Hudson's Bay Company'.

And so began the chain of events which eventually thrust Kanaka William into the centre of an international storm. The military board found the improvements claimed by the Company were

> . . . mere shells, rapidly going to decay, most of them propped up to prevent their falling down, the only exception being the dwelling-house in front of the depot quartermaster's office, which, although occupied, is also in a dilapidated condition.

The dilapidated dwelling belonged to Kanaka William and although it was undoubtedly humble it

Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology



The Kanaka village on the west side of Fort Vancouver, 1851. From a drawing by George Gibbs.

was his home. When William was ordered to evacuate he consulted John Work who was then in charge of Fort Vancouver. Work told William not to leave until directed to do so by Work himself, then wrote an indignant protest to the military officials:

> . . . one of the Company's oldest and most faithful servants, who has occupied his present residence — which with the adjoining field cultivated by him is a part of the Company's property — for more than ten years, has been notified that he must leave his house next week, or be forcibly removed by a file of soldiers, as his house was to be torn down and his garden thrown open.

The army responded by stating that if any of the buildings on the area possessed any value,

> you are at liberty to remove them, and in fact you are respectfully requested to do so within the ensuing week . . . The execution of these instructions will make it necessary that "Kanaka William" find shelter elsewhere.

But William and Work held fast. On 12 March 1860, William watched the army remove the fences from around the Company's fields. On the 16th he saw the soldiers burn down a vacated house which had been used for storing hay. On the 19th the soldiers destroyed the Company's old hospital and another house, and then they turned their attention to William's dwelling. When they removed the doors and the windows William finally left. The next day, 20 March, the Hawaiian watched helplessly while soldiers set fire to the remains of his old home.

The outrage was quickly reported to officials in London. British protests were presented to President Buchanan, who immediately dispatched orders to military officials in Oregon 'which will prevent effectually any interference with the conditions of the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company'.

The 'Kanaka William incident' hastened the Company's decision to abandon Fort Vancouver, and what little was left in the way of services and personnel was transferred to Victoria.

Company records indicate that William R. Kaulehelehe worked as an 'assistant' in Victoria until at least 1868-69. Mary, William's wife, is not mentioned after 1845, and it is possible that she is one of the many Hawaiians who died at Fort Vancouver and who were buried in the nearby cemetery.

After 1869 Kanaka William fades from history's pages. Did his twenty-five years of service with the Company terminate because of his death? Or did he, like many of his fellow-Islanders, retire to a small farm on the coast of British Columbia?

Most Hawaiians who settled on the West Coast took Indian wives and became part of Indian communities. Today many coastal families recall a Hawaiian ancestor whose name has vanished from memory. It is quite possible that one of these forgotten ancestors was Kanaka William. ◆

AN AFFAIR OF STATE

BY RAY HORSEFIELD

ONE DAY SOME FORTY YEARS AGO word reached our town of The Pas, Manitoba, that Lord Tweedsmuir, then Governor-General of Canada, would honour us with a visit, accompanied by his lady, his brother, his sister — Miss Anna Buchan, better known as the author 'O. Douglas' — and his son Alastair. They would use the Canadian National Railway's Royal Train, originally prepared for the tour made by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1939.

Our mayor was Ben Dembinsky, a self-made man who had come to town many years before as an itinerant fur-buyer. By sheer hard work, coupled with thrift and an eye for a good investment, he had risen to own and operate a thriving general store where the trappers and the prospectors could outfit themselves with everything necessary to the outer and inner man, and even a fancy dress for a fancy lady on occasion.

He and his mayoress were plump little people of kindly ways, and it was a privilege for a gentile like me to be invited to their home now and again, to observe their faithful keeping of the old traditions: the *mezuzah* on the doorpost faithfully saluted as they went in and out, the separate dishes for meat and milk foods, and the appropriate foods for festival days.

When the great news arrived, the mayor called an emergency meeting of the town council to make preparations. 'We must have the Town Band out, of course' he said.

'But we have no town band' was the discouraging reply.

'Nonsense!' cried our sturdy little mayor. 'We used to have a band.'

'Yes, but that was a long time ago. They have not performed for years, and the players are all scattered, some of them dead, some moved away, and some too old to play.'

'Well, round them up! The town spent a lot of money on those trumpets and things, and they must be around somewhere, and there must be people who can play them. Get them out here!'

An urgent appeal was placed in the local paper on the Tuesday, calling for a band practice to be held at the railway station on the following evening, to be directed by Charlie Hill, the organist at the Anglican Church.

The result was memorable. The surviving members of the old Town Band, together with a dozen aspiring youngsters, all soloists at heart, struggled against a horde of hungry mosquitoes that had no soul for music, while every husky dog in town sat back on its haunches and bayed its dismay at the resulting cacophonies.

The unfortunate organist called the practice off, announcing that they would try again the following evening — if the citizens would kindly keep their dogs at home. By late Friday the band felt they had mastered the national anthem, though it would have taken a very charitable referee to proclaim it even a draw. Then came Saturday, the Day of Visitation.

Early in the morning the viceregal train chuffed in from the south and sat in the station, panting gently, with all the blinds tactfully lowered on the platform side, lest the distinguished visitors should be thought to be spying on the town's last-minute confusions. The official 'time of arrival' was not until eleven.

Invitations had been hurriedly sent by the mayor and council to certain 'somebodies' — by which the mayor meant himself, his wife, his councillors with their wives, the entire police force — all one of him, with 'Chief of Police' emblazoned on his cap — the war veterans, the 'reverends', as he always called the clergy, and the leaders of various kinds of uplift, such as the Social Welfare Committee, the Adult Education Council, the Women's Institute, and so on. These were directed to be at the station at half past ten, and of course we were all there in our best bibs and tuckers, drawn up in a long, expectant line the full length of the platform, facing the shuttered train. A sudden bustle, and a distraught alderman hurried up with an enormous sheaf of gladioli, which he thrust into my hands.

I did not want it, so promptly passed it to my wife. But neither did she want it, and I whispered 'Pass it on!' She was flanked, however, on the other side by the Salvation Army Captain, a stolid, Scandinavian bachelor, who would have nothing to do with the

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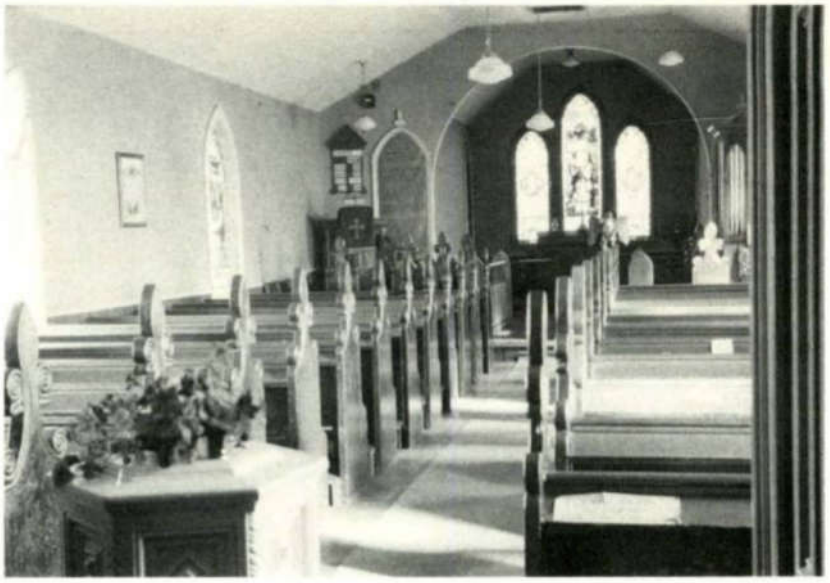
Archdeacon Horsefield was a missionary to the Indian people at Grand Rapids, The Pas and Flin Flon. Now semi-retired, he and Mrs Horsefield live in Sidney, B.C. Photographs are from the author's collection.

Mayor I. B. Dembinsky and Mrs Dembinsky greet the Governor-General and Lady Tweedsmuir on their memorable visit to The Pas in the summer of 1939.



The interior of Christ Church at The Pas. The carved wood furnishings are said to have been done by members of the Franklin Search Party under Sir John Richardson who wintered in The Pas in 1847.

flowers, so that she was perforce left holding them. None of us knew what to do with them, and the mayor was too busy chasing the inevitable intrusive small boy and his dog to have time to instruct us. The bouquet was undoubtedly intended for Lady Tweedsmuir, but who was to present it, and when, and where, and how? Shortly the mayor returned with a small girl who was to make the offering, the daughter of a respected town clerk, recently deceased, and we were relieved of the flowers and of the anxiety together.

There was a small movement going on quietly at one end of the viceregal car, but nobody paid it much attention; we were all trying to decide what to do about the posies. The mayor and the little girl stood facing our line-up, with their backs to the train, the former dabbing at his shining pate with a spotted bandana handkerchief held in his right hand, while his left hand kept up a nervous jiggling of the keys in his pants pocket; and the little girl was getting more and more confused by contradictory suggestions from all sides.

All of a sudden I noticed that Their Excellencies had alighted from the train and were standing behind our mayor, patiently waiting for someone to be so kind as to take a little notice of them. Was ever a Governor-General received with a ruder indifference? We were all so horrified that nobody thought to raise a cheer. We stood like naughty children caught at the cookie jar.

An aide-de-camp took hold of the situation by the mayor's elbow, and led His Worship forward to be presented. At that moment an alarming din broke out at the far end of the wooden platform, and we saw the Governor-General stiffen to attention. He alone was aware that the outburst must have been the national anthem; none of us had recognized our band's version of it. We all shuffled to attention as best we could and tried to look as if we had been standing that way for hours — all except Mr Mayor, who continued to slouch with one hand in his pocket, jingling keys, while the other scratched the back of his head. Fortunately he had taken his hat off to do this.

The 'music' over, Their Excellencies were led down the line, the mayor nervously presenting us to Lord Tweedsmuir, while the deputy mayor, in a wonderful state of perspiring anxiety, performed the same office for Lady Tweedsmuir. None of our ladies remembered to curtsy, but the little girl presented the bouquet quite charmingly after all. The Governor-General listened to our mayor's speech and made in return what we assumed to be a pleasant little speech of thanks in English and French. Nobody heard it as a mile-long train of empty grain cars returning from Churchill chose that moment to go through.

Perhaps it may now be recorded that Bob Taylor, the editor of our local paper, *The Northern Mail*, was among those presented on the platform. He was a young man who prided himself on being rather a natty dresser, and he had bought a cheerful tartan tie to enliven his tweed suit. Lord Tweedsmuir spotted it at once and asked him what tartan it might be. Bob had to confess that he did not know, but rather thought it was Royal Stewart. 'I think so too' said His Excellency. 'You see, that's my tartan.' (But when the editor took it off that night and examined it, he found it labelled 'Maclean'.)

Inspection of the town's 'historic' Anglican Church — then all of 45 years old, but incorporating some of the furnishings made for an earlier building in 1847, reputedly by carpenters of a Franklin Relief Expedition that wintered at The Pas and Cumberland

Governor-General Lord Tweedsmuir and Lady Tweedsmuir on their visit to Christ Church. From the left, Mayor Dembinsky and Mrs Dembinsky, R. H. Horsefield and on the right, the Reverend W. Hullin, rector of Christ Church.

House — was followed by the whole party climbing back into cars and being driven a hundred and twenty yards to the cenotaph, a simple granite pillar topped by what looked like a leafy pineapple but was locally believed to represent a flaming torch. Here His Excellency deposited a wreath and a cornet owner gave a rendering of the Last Post that can most kindly be described as surprising, after which he started in on Reveille. All the people who had begun to wander away came to a ragged attention, wondering whether he was trying to do the Last Post over again or merely to put in a part that he had missed.

The viceregal party went by rail to Churchill, where they met the Honourable John Buchan, another son of the Governor-General, who in an endeavour to recover his health, had spent the season of 1938-39 as a fur trader at the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Cape Dorset on Baffin Island. A week later the entire family returned to our town. Lady Tweedsmuir and Miss Buchan were taken to tea at the home of the local industrial magnate and there met the members of the Women's Institute, one of whom, with a rare talent for putting her foot in her mouth, asked Miss Buchan 'And how many children have you *now*, dear?'

Meanwhile I was privileged to ride with His Excellency and the Honourable John around the Indian reserve, for the Indians, as wards of the Crown, rightly claimed some special notice from the Crown's personal representative. I was invited to act as interpreter as needed.

Now the Indians, of course, have their own way of doing things. Chief Louis McGillivray and his councillors were to welcome the distinguished visitors at the far end of the reserve — thus making sure that they saw all of it. The day was hot, and a chief's uniform at that time consisted of a double-breasted reefer jacket of heavy blue serge, with gold-coloured braid on collar and cuffs, a black felt hat with a gold braid band, and trousers of some tremendous hairy material that seemed to have been woven from a buffalo's mane, with a red flannel stripe down the outseam. The councillors' uniforms were the same, except that they lacked the gold braid — thus fulfilling the terms of the treaty: 'A suit of clothes for the chief every three years, and a suit for each of the councillors, but not as good as the chief's.' The chief also wore a tremendous medal presented to one of his predecessors by a long-gone governor-general.

The chief saw no point in his burdening himself with so much finery on so hot a day before it was absolutely necessary, so when the viceregal car drew up with a flourish at the schoolhouse steps, we found the chief reclining at his ease, shirt-sleeved and unbuttoned, on the top step. No whit abashed, the chief picked up his flag under his arm, ambled over to the flagstaff and hoisted it, and only then put on his jacket, buttoned himself, and strolled over to inspect his guests and to shake hands and present a letter containing both words of welcome and (not to miss a golden opportunity) complaint and a petition of rights.

The Governor-General alighted from his car and met the chief most courteously, hat in hand, read his letter and undertook to forward it to the proper authorities. Then he went on to say that he too was a chief of the Crees, and that his name was Atu . . . er Atuy . . . er . . . but he could not get it out. The Honourable John tried too, with no better success, so that it was left to me to tell the Governor-General that his name was Oot-ah-tu-yoo-kayo, the Teller of Tales. For this was, of course, John Buchan, the author. ◆

In 1971, divers foraging the bottom of the inner West End Harbour of Marble Island on the west coast of Hudson Bay, found submerged wreckage, probably a piece of the whaling ship *Orray Taft*. Several salvage explorations were made at Marble with the hope that the wreckage might be returned to New Bedford as a tourist attraction. At the height of this enthusiasm Captain G. J. Parker's shipwreck journal was found, detailing the *Taft* and *Gibbs* wrecks and dimming hopes of any worth-while salvage. This article, based on the journal, is an account of Parker's last Hudson Bay voyage.

Dr Martin, the author, is Director of the Kendall Whaling Museum in Sharon, Massachusetts. Sketches are from the museum's collection unless otherwise credited.

Life and Death at Marble Island

1864-73

By Kenneth R. Martin

Captain G. J. Parker, c. 1864. Courtesy of Christine Parker.

MARBLE ISLAND'S barren, uninhabited whiteness bears the scars of its days as a wintering spot for American whaleships. Outside its western harbour entrance lies wind-swept Deadman Island, marked by numerous shallow graves. Most of these date from 1873 when, at terrible cost, the crews of two wrecked American whaleships endured a nightmarish winter. That incident is in many ways symbolic of Hudson Bay whaling, an odd sidelight to a once vast industry.

A central character in that Marble Island disaster was Captain George J. Parker of Acushnet, Massachusetts. The son of a career whaling skipper, Parker had been in the trade thirteen years when, at age twenty-eight, he made captain. Parker's journals, acquired over many years by the Kendall Whaling Museum, cover his four voyages to Hudson Bay: as mate of the bark *Antelope*, 1861-63; and master of the bark *Orray Taft*, 1864-65, 1866-67, and 1872-73. The last of these volumes, recently acquired, is especially interesting.

Though he had whaled every ocean, Parker returned repeatedly to Hudson Bay. It is hard to understand why so many sought whales there, unless it is because Hudson Bay whaling voyages were shorter than most in the fishery, or because Bay whaling required a specialist's knowledge. While Parker lacked the explorer's venturesome curiosity, his journals reflect pride in his arctic expertise.

The bowhead whale, seldom seen south of 60° north latitude, is a docile giant, plentiful in the eastern Arctic until early Dutch and British whalers almost exterminated that stock. Overfishing of bowheads was well under way in the western Arctic too, when in 1860 the first Americans ventured into Hudson Strait. The plenitude of bowheads there and the suggestion of more in the Bay itself caused an onrush of Yankee vessels. So did the American Civil War, which drove up prices on whale products but made whaling hazardous on more established grounds. In the next 55 years, overfishing, predominantly by Americans, reduced the numbers of bowheads to commercial extinction. Stocks apparently have not recovered: the sight of a bowhead in Hudson Bay these days is a rare spectacle.

As spring thaws broke up Hudson Bay ice, bowheads moved north, feeding on zooplankton. Following leads along the north-western shore, they would pass Marble Island on their way to Roes Welcome Sound, Repulse Bay and points north. It was essential, therefore, for vessels to be on those whaling grounds in spring and summer. Access to the grounds could be had only by sailing through Hudson Strait in late June. Since the Strait was navigable for only a few weeks per year, ships came prepared to winter in the Bay after summer whaling. They could thus be on hand as soon as ice began to clear, put in another summer on the grounds, and sail through Hudson Strait before it blocked again. Vessels wintered in groups as a rule. George Parker and several other skippers preferred Marble Island as a wintering site because of its protected West End Harbour, and because its southerly location afforded whalemen an early chance to get at the bowheads. The fact that the Bay was, until 1870, the domain of the Hudson's Bay Company meant little or nothing to the Americans, although the Company regarded the Americans as poachers. After the region passed to Canada, Americans continued to whale in the Bay. Little was done to regulate this until the *Neptune* expedition of 1903.

Hudson Bay whaling was fraught with hazards for the most competent whaleman. Just getting into the Bay was no mean task. For example, in July 1864, the *Orray Taft* was working amidst icebergs. Getting fast to a berg two miles square, the ship whirled up the strait under westerly winds — until the twisting ice worked under her, almost tearing her apart. Two years later, Parker and the *Taft* found themselves in an altogether different predicament. Heavy gales in the strait tossed the *Taft* almost on her beam ends. There was no iceberg threat that year, but fog and ten miles of land ice made celestial or visual navigation impossible. In clearer weather, mirages confused visibility. And compasses were useless in this area. In such situations, whaleships kept close together, always anticipating distress.

An 'Orray Taft' whaleboat in trouble.
A water-colour by a crew member.

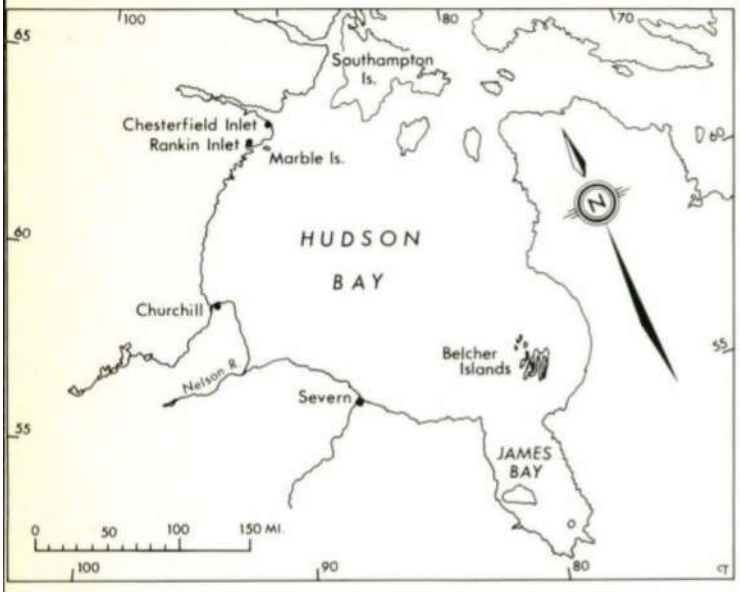
Parker was an intrepid whaleman, intelligent but unlucky. Knowing this, he was constantly attentive to the tricks of his trade, and was especially proud of his ability to cope with arctic winters. Summer held its own terrors. Here is his comment for 14 July 1867:

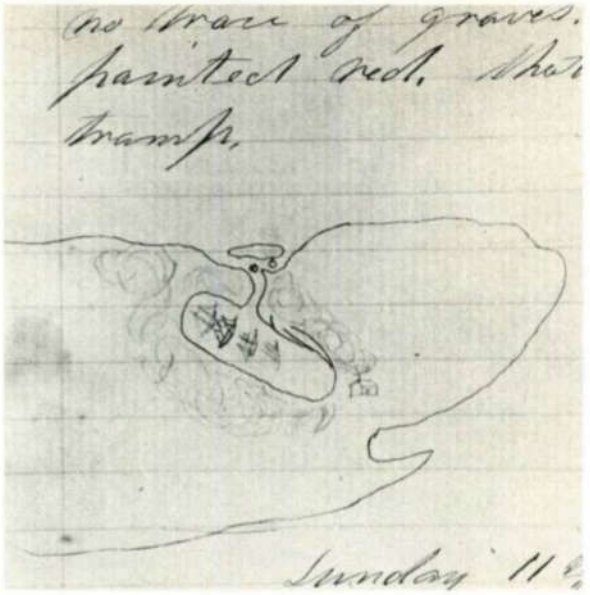
> Morning. this has been the worst night that ever, I experienced. at ten P.M. last night blowing most a hurricane, and at Eleven commenced to thunder and some of as sharp lightning, as I ever saw. it was one continual flash, striking all around us. at two a.m. the wind came square around and at the same time the ship was struck. it seemed to come in one solid mass of fire right in on the chain cables all from the mainmast forward was on[e] solid ball of fire. . . . can tell nothing by compass . . . we cant tell how we are going, and the Ice will not let us gain much to windward . . . it seems a wonder to me that the lightning did no other damage. it went all over the men who were on the fore brace, knocking them all down, but cannot see any marks, anywhere . . . another such a night I never wish to see again, a lee shore in a gale of wind with Ice just as thick as it could be. . . . but I acknowledge the supreme power that carried us through the night.

A few days later, sloshing through thin ice, the *Taft* appeared to be within sight of Marble Island:

> . . . the land that I called Marble Island deceived me, so that nearly had the ship ashore. . . . I had made out that it was not the Island, although others said it was. . . . just as I got on deck I saw a reef close aboard on the lee bow . . . and the fog lit up over the main land and here we were in Chesterfield Inlet. . . . tacked ship and worked out. the wind let us head out nearly in the track that we had come in. . . . the old O Taft has been nearly ashore for a number of days I think but hope have got her clear now.

Compared to the Bay's navigational risks, whaling itself was fairly safe. In spring, crews customarily whaled along the floes in six-man whale-boats, putting to sea later in the season when the iced-in mother ships could be sawed out. Whaling's chief hazard was the





Captain Parker's sketch map of the Marble Island harbour, 1864, showing the whaleships 'Cornelia', 'Orray Taft', 'Glacier' and 'Ansel Gibbs' at anchor.

tendency of a stricken bowhead to make straight for the ice with a fast boat in tow. Sometimes a wounded whale might thrash against a boat or even capsize it. Knowing how to avoid this was a matter of experience.

Most of a Hudson Bay whaleman's time was spent in winter quarters. On all her voyages to the Bay, the *Taft* wintered in the inner harbour at Marble's west end. Despite its popularity, this anchorage had several drawbacks. The outer harbour (actually a sheltered gut between Deadman and Marble) is connected to the inner anchorage by a narrow passage. Athwart the entrance to this passage is a dangerous ledge. To get inside, vessels had to float over the 'passage rock' at high tide and warp themselves through the passage. This was not awkward for small New Bedford vessels like the *Taft*, *Abbie Bradford*, *Glacier*, or other regular visitors. But larger vessels, such as the bark *Ansel Gibbs*, found the passage a tight squeeze. Once inside, wintering vessels would freeze in while crews housed their decks and packed snow around the ships' sides. The West End Harbour measures only about a mile by half a mile, so vessels could expect to endure months at close quarters.

Wintering whalemen relied upon mainland Eskimos for fresh meat (mostly caribou) and winter clothing. Parker admired his Eskimo suppliers, was fluent in their language and generous in trade. His men's lives depended on fresh meat, for the whalers did not stock adequate antiscorbutics. Thus, Marble's location put whalemen at the mercy of mild winter weather: unless there were low temperatures and negligible winds, no ice bridge would form to the mainland's hunting grounds. Moving ice meant no fresh meat, and that meant scurvy.

An eyewitness sketch of the 'Marble Island Minstrels' in action, 1865. 'John Bull' and 'Carl Carendo' are stage names.

Whaler's caricatures of the 'Taft's' first mate, Edwin Potter, 1865. Potter later skippered the 'Glacier' which rescued 'Taft' survivors.

It may seem surprising that shipowners and masters could be casual about the dangers of scurvy. But home-bought antiscorbutics were expensive and hard to preserve. Relying on Eskimo game was risky but cheap. In any case, a touch of scurvy during an idle winter would not much affect spring whaling, scurvy being almost instantly curable by the right kind of fresh food. Parker tried to reduce scurvy on the *Taft*, but did so as a matter of professional competence, not humanitarianism. Though young, he was hardened and conditioned by years as a seaman to accept the industry's meanness. In 1867, for example, bound back to New Bedford, all hands came down with scurvy. Parker, eager to get home, bemoaned how hard it was to sail with a sick crew in a crowded sea lane, but he sailed more than two weeks before begging fresh food from a passing vessel. This he did only to keep men alive. Parker understood the connection between diet and scurvy, but, mistaking effects for causes, believed its symptoms were psychosomatic, afflicting lethargic, despondent men. 'All hands have the scurvy,' he once wrote, 'but it is all the man. A man of energy and ambition gets along well enough.' In winter quarters, Parker, like many officers, kept active by relentlessly hunting Marble Island's small game. He would live to regret this withering assault.

The view that exercise prevented scurvy was evidently shared by other captains. When, in 1864-1865, five vessels wintered at Marble, elaborate steps were taken to provide active recreation for crews. That season, whales were abundant, and wartime prices high. Marble Island became a cozy community, enjoying organized sports, holiday dinners and dance parties aboard the spacious *Ansel Gibbs*. A festive atmosphere prevailed. One highlight, gleefully described by a *Taft* crew member, was a rollicking prize fight 'between the celebrated plug-ugly Tom Crow and Loony Pete'. Crow went down for the count in round three:

> Both men were now so badly punished that they had to be carried to the Scratch. Pete led off by striking Crow a terrific blow somewhere between the right eye and the left toe Which Sent Crow down with the words Marthajane Slowly oozing from his mouth . . . and Pete was declared the winner.

The most impressive aspect of the 1864-65 season was a community theatre, in which a troupe of whalemen rehearsed and performed weekly plays and skits. Original plans called for the theatre to be built of local quartzite; but practicality dictated a temporary structure of cask lumber. The building, according to Parker, was 'as nice a one as ever was built in Hudsons bay which is not saying much.' (Its rock foundation, incidentally, is still discernible.)

The 1864 theatrical season opened with the Hudson Bay Minstrels performing 'The Mock Doctor' to a full house. Later offerings were more ambitious, including such chestnuts as Sheridan's 'Pizarro'. Outside, the frigid floes cracked and roared; inside, the theatrics grew heated. So did a backstage charcoal burner, fumes from which almost caused a real tragedy during the debut of 'Pizarro'. Despite this, scorbutic whalemen forgot their aching joints, and the play was well-received. 'Tragedy is their forte,' concluded Parker after sampling the Minstrels' repertoire.

That season yielded enough oil and baleen to make a profitable voyage. It was the *Taft*'s first and last success in Hudson Bay.

By contrast, 1866-67 was a season of hard luck and blue moods. The *Taft*'s only companion at Marble was the Hudson's Bay Company bark *Ocean Nymph* of London, a vessel trying vainly to revive Company whaling. It was a desolate season for both ships: rivalry for Eskimo trade, and unwillingness to co-operate in spring whaling ruined months for Britishers and Americans. (The British side of this episode has been told by W. Gillies Ross, in *The Beaver*, Summer 1973, 40-47.) Unlike the suspicious, backbiting officers of the *Nymph*, the Yankees were old hands at making the best of things:

> [29 January 1867.] All hands employed sliding down hill on their 'set down' a hill almost perpendicular one hundred feet down. . . . They would make a string by one taking the feet of one behind him under his arms and so on to as many seven went down [at] once. I was afraid that there might be some broken bones. Some I saw slide where they had a jump of some thirty feet and I am sure that their brains are not in the lower part of their body, or they would have beat them out.

Alone in his cabin, listening to the *Taft*'s bedded hull creaking under ice pressure, Parker brooded. He regretted leaving his small son and pregnant wife behind this year, he grew anxious over next spring's whaling prospects, and resentful at the stand-offish behaviour of the crew of the *Ocean Nymph*:

[24 February 1867] Our companion the O Nymph don't hear from very often don't know whether they are dead or alive. It is not very pleasant living here in this dreary place within a hundred yards of a vessel and not seeing any of them at all for a week or two except at a distance. If it is English fashion, keep me from England.

Parker withheld professional advice from the neophyte British, and pre-empted Eskimo trade as best he could. By doing so, he may have exerted a strong influence on Hudson's Bay Company policy: the *Nymph*'s voyage proved an utter failure, and the Company gave up bowhead whaling for 25 years.

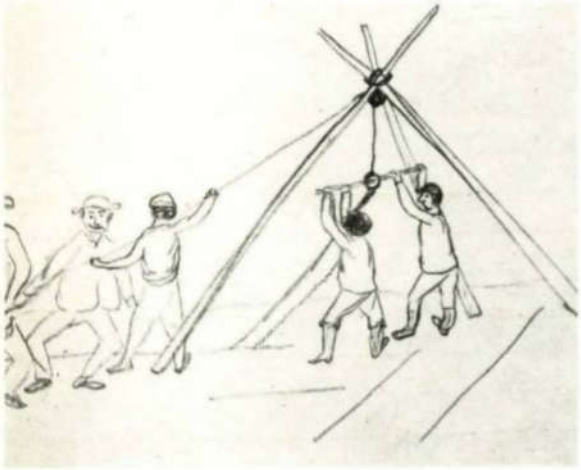
Meanwhile, even Marble's landscape, once so congenial to Parker, seemed depressing:

[5 March 1867.] . . . it is a desolate look . . . no signs of any living thing, nothing but barren rock and snow . . . and all around thick impenitrable fog caused by the air being so much colder than the water, when on the hill the nearest to the ships is the only sign of habitations or man, and it is the only thing in the prospect that has any cheerful look, and to see the smoke rising from the different parts does look cheerful to me. But we are in the hands of one who can watch over us and protect us and in him I trust.

Bay whaling in 1867 was almost as poor for the *Taft* as for the *Nymph*. Parker's ship grossed less than her expenses. Discouraged, he quit whaling for almost two years; then apparently in need of money, he took a mate's berth on a New Bedford sperm whaler in 1869.

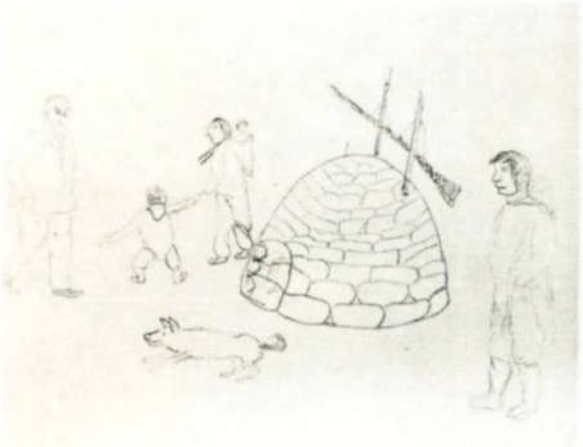
In 1872, Parker and the *Taft*, old partners in good and bad times, were fatefully reunited for a third Hudson Bay voyage, their last. In poor health and financially hard pressed, Parker needed to rebuild his reputation. But, as before, he returned to the Bay with all the requisites except luck.

Crew members sawing ice at Marble Island, 1864-1865.



Whalemen from the 'Orray Taft' haul block ice for the winter water supply.

Trouble began early in the voyage. Off course and enveloped by fog, Parker found the latest charts inaccurate: at one point he determined a twenty-mile error in the charted width of Fisher Strait. But 'the Welcome' was crowded with such familiar vessels as the *Ansel Gibbs*, *Abbie Bradford*, and the bark *Glacier*, the *Taft*'s sister ship, skippered by Parker's former mate, Edwin Potter. There were also whales aplenty, but the *Taft* killed none. Disappointed, Parker headed for winter quarters, making Marble's outer harbour on 13 August 1872. The *Bradford* was already anchored in the lee of Deadman Island. Neither vessel could negotiate the passage into the inner harbour because of powerful southerly winds. Preparing to ride out the gale in the outer harbour, Parker took no chances, dropping both anchors. But suddenly the port chain snapped and the *Taft* began to swing toward nearby rocks. The crew improvised a kedge anchor and managed to rescue her. At nightfall all seemed well, the *Taft*'s position reinforced by a double whale line run to Deadman. Parker had the crew stand sea watches throughout the night, and retired confidently. At daybreak the *Taft* started to swing again; the whale line had parted. Her stern swept onto the passage rock, unhinging the rudder. Seven men lowered in a whaleboat and ran an emergency line to Marble, to haul the ship out of danger. Slowly the ship began to free herself. But then luck ran out altogether:



A whaleman from the 'Orrav Taft' visits hunters encamped near the ship, 1865. Fraternization with Eskimo women was common.

. . . had just got her so she would sail clear of the passage rock, when the starboard chain parted. . . . went onto the rocks stern first her rudder tearing away all the planking and knocking her stern post away up to the lower gudgeon and starting the planking from stern post, swing broadside and on pounding heavy run lines to try to haul her clear from the rocks. but the wind and sea held her on. could not lower [any] but the starboard boat the Sch[ooner *Abbie Bradford*] sent us no assistance, as the surf was heavy.

The *Taft* was about to disintegrate. Her rigging was cut away to ease her, but Parker feared the vessel would break up before his men could save themselves or any provisions. But then the wind shifted to south-west; and as the tide rose, the ruined vessel could be hauled into the passage. Captain Robert Gifford of the secure *Bradford* lent a hand, and the *Taft* was finally beached at the north-west end of the inner harbour. In dismay, Parker surveyed the damage:

. . . as the tide left her we found her false keel all gone but a small piece . . . and the planking started off and battered up her port side abrest the fore chains. broke (the timbers) and the planking chafed and the oakum out, the tide flowing in and out. . . .

Parker immediately got busy, as though nothing very calamitous had happened. He ordered the wreck patched and winterized, went to the mainland to procure Eskimo hunters, and even declared his intention to get in some shore whaling before winter. But in fact, he was faced with a major catastrophe. The wreck had demoralized the crew, many of whom were green youngsters. It was obvious to crewmen that Parker had forfeited his authority with the loss of the *Taft*. She was no longer a vessel, and he was no longer legally an autocrat. All Parker could do was to demonstrate leadership.

Still, the *Taft* was secure and provisioned, and the worst that might be expected was that her refugees would have to be transported penniless to New Bedford next summer aboard a luckier whaler. This was a reasonable hope — until the arrival of the *Ansel Gibbs*.

The *Gibbs* had put in several months of Atlantic whaling before coming to the Bay. By the time she made Marble, she was a troubled vessel. Her log-book, now at the Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts, shows signs of a complete rift between seamen and officers: complaints about food, an overloaded sick list, and finally sailors' protests against Captain Thomas McPherson's command. It was a demoralized crew that worked the *Gibb* into the outer harbour on 18 October 1872.

The *Gibbs*, like the ill-fated *Taft*, dropped anchor to ride out heavy south-east winds before warping into the inner harbour. Incredibly, her single anchor chain parted. She was blown forcefully onto the rocks west of the passage and quickly broke up in the wind and tide, leaving her crew with few provisions. These wretched whalemen became wards of the *Taft*:

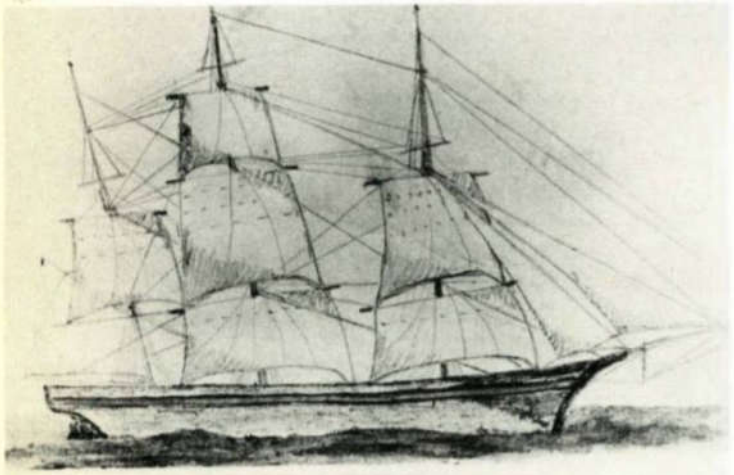
Nearly exhausted on the night they went ashore, have took them all in with us all living together and sharing our stores with them and time will tell how we shall come out. the season is so far advanced

that cannot build a house and live separate, as they have no fuel. . . . they steal everything they can get . . . they are a lawless gang of men. . . . there is no game of any kind on the island . . . but we will hope for the best. were the men a little more like men we should winter well enough but there is no manliness among them. Should the natives get to us . . . we will be all right, but it has every appearance of being an open winter.

Matters quickly ran from bad to worse. The only other vessel at Marble was the *Bradford,* which remained aloof from the castaways by wintering in the outer harbour. Captains Parker and Gifford fell into dispute over the customary plan by which ships shared Eskimo supplies. The resultant bad blood worsened the lot of the *Taft* and *Gibbs* men.

Winter came on. Parker could not reassert mastery over his erstwhile crew or the *Gibbs* squatters. He had no intention of compromising his officers' privileges; but on the other hand, he was apparently disinclined to enforce command discipline. Captain McPherson, it seems, made almost no effort on this behalf. Parker's authority, intermittent at best, rested largely upon his seniority as an arctic hand.

A whaleman's sketch of the 'Ansel Gibbs'.

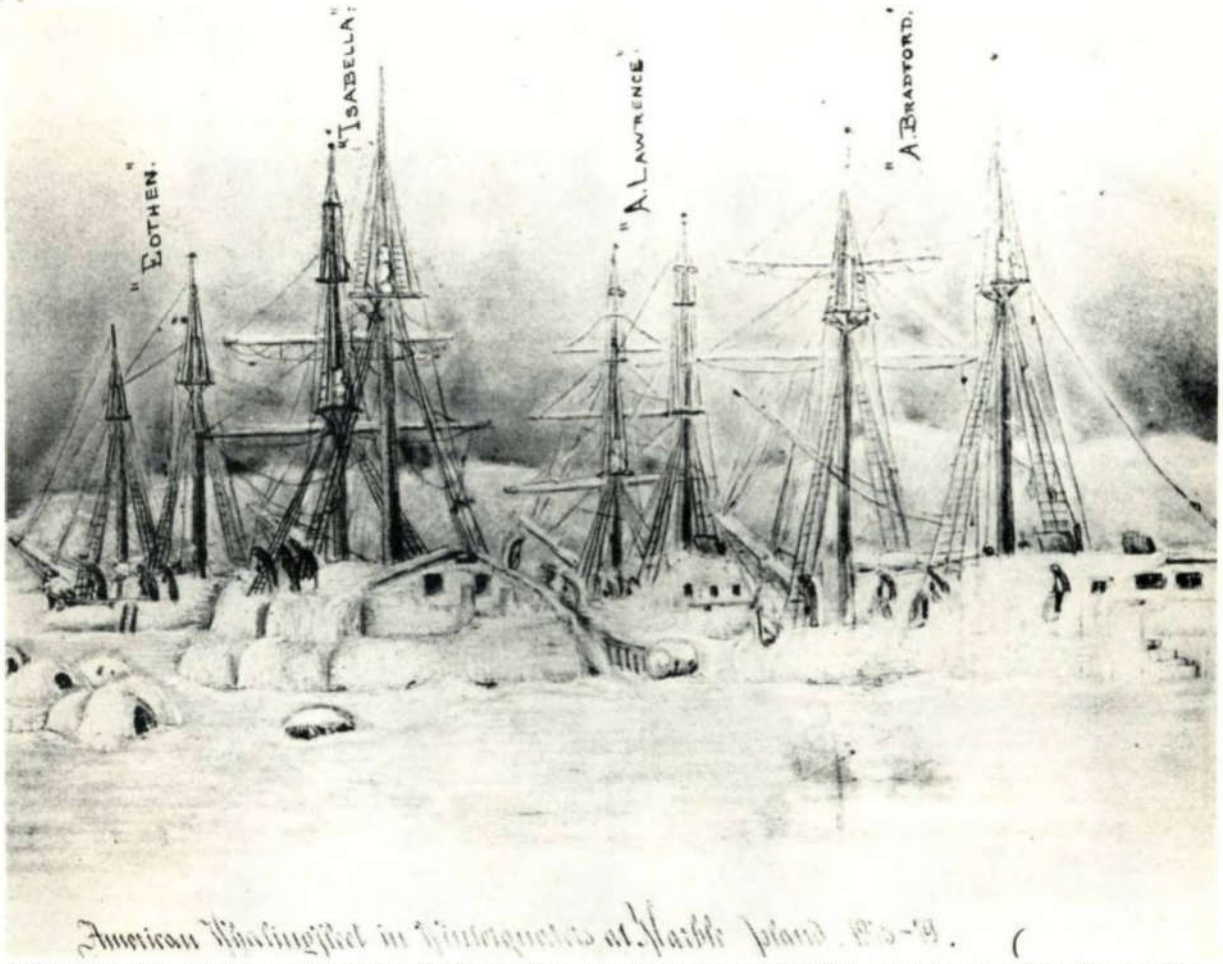


. . . I am surrounded by those who have no gratitude nor feeling all would be well were it not for the mutinous feelings amongst the crew they . . . are bound to do no more than they are obliged to to keep alive at the present time and they must suffer when the cold weather comes, whatever happens I hold myself as blameless. I will do what I can for all but I can't do the work that is required to place the ship in a condition to pass a comfortable winter. . . .

In late November, with temperatures as low as minus twenty Fahrenheit, Parker tried rationing food and fuel. The officers busied themselves hunting seal, fox and walrus. Firewood to supplement the coal supply was salvaged from the wrecks; but chilly crewmen, living dormitory style amidships and in the

A 'Taft' whaleman claps two shipmates in irons.

(Right) 'Orrav Taft' off Southampton Island, sketched by a whaleman in 1864.



This sketch of the American whaling fleet at Marble Island was done in the winter of 1878-79 by a member of the Schwatka expedition. At this date the 'Orray Taft', wrecked in 1872, was lying on the shore of the inner harbour.

forecastle, noticed that officers' coal rations exceeded theirs. On Christmas Day, Parker realized the hands were helping themselves to coal, not cutting wood. Brandishing a pistol, he threatened to shoot offenders on the spot. The thievery stopped then and there, but Parker's victory was one of pistol diplomacy, not authority. Two days later, Parker refused an offer by the crews to parley, put suspected trouble-makers in irons and disarmed a few others, rendering the crew helpless and idle.

Shifting winds kept Eskimo hunters from getting to Marble. Scurvy appeared. Morale fell. Parker's faith in activity and will-power as an antiscorbutic sustained him:

> . . . it has been so cold in the cabin that could not keep warm, freezing but a few feet from the red hot stove . . . that is the way we live in these parts. I have a bedstead made and have all the clothes I can pile on it and cant say I am over warm. We are truly a miserable set, I have a slight touch of scurvey, but when I can get exercise I feel well.

But soon Parker himself was finding it hard to get about. The progress of the disease fascinated and appalled the castaways. Parker mentally wrote off quite a few, believing 'they . . . had rather lay and die'. The demands of survival allowed him to waste no energy on the hopeless. He was incredulous when men refused to eat the flesh of foxes killed for pelts. But he did not insist that men save themselves: 'Such is the difference from having a ship under us, can not do with them as I could with one under me.' The warren of sick crew members became foul and hellish. Once, with outside temperatures at minus fifty-eight Fahrenheit, cooling condensation produced a snowfall — inside the vessel.

Parker did what he could for the sick. And he exercised, despite his growing soreness, trudging for miles though each step was painful as a tooth extraction. Finally, time ran out for the weak and demoralized. On 6 February 1873 a twenty-four-year-old hand died. His shipmates managed to dig a grave in minus forty-degree weather, but were too weak and frozen to inter him. On 11 February a *Gibbs* man died. As he logged the death, Parker saw no end, writing 'There is several who are so far gone that it is doubtful if anything would relieve them.' Deaths came on

rapidly as crewmen, bent by excruciating soreness, simply gave up. One man apparently starved himself to death. In all, four *Taft* and ten *Gibbs* castaways died between February and July 1873. They were buried in shallow graves on Deadman Island. Coffins were soon out of the question, so most bodies were sewn in canvas.

Parker was determined to make it to spring. His journal provided a link with reality, and his morale held. He ministered to hopeless cases and dined enthusiastically on food crew members had left. Meanwhile, a trickle of fresh meat, brought across the ice by Eskimos, helped some men hang on. Watching his wards die, Parker eyed the snug *Bradford* bitterly:

> . . . our deer meat that I bought yesterday and ten salmon was lost . . . Capt. Gifford with his men went out and backed it home, thereby doing what I call a Mandy trick we have on board this hulk eighteen men who cant get out of their berths. . . . the Sch[ooner] has one man who does not get out the rest of her scurvey men are out hunting and playing ball. . . . it was a fine thing to take our meat, shows well for the men who would do it.

By May 1873, when temperatures rose above zero, there were thirteen graves on Deadman. The *Bradford* prepared to saw out of the ice and go whaling, leaving all castaways at Marble. She would return late in the summer. Captain Gifford apparently donated no hunting supplies. In warmer weather, survivors who felt well enough moved ashore to hunt and to escape the *Taft*'s rampaging vermin.

That summer not a ship called at Marble except the *Bradford*, which stopped in late July to prepare for her homeward voyage. Parker went aboard to arrange passage for his men. The response was dumfounding:

> . . . I was met by Capt Gifford with a storm of abuse and insult. I said nothing to irritate him in the least . . . he would not talk but to abuse me said we had (or rather I had) tried to hinder him from getting a voyage, and that I could go to Hell with my men, and that we should not one of us come aboard of his vessel while he lived. he said I had men living under me who would come down on me as soon as they get clear from me, and must have meant Capt. McPherson and men.

The *Bradford* took aboard all the *Gibbs* survivors, except a few deemed undesirable, and left for home.

What was the meaning of this harsh act? It is difficult to explain, but perhaps Parker's food disputes, his accusations of stolen supplies, or his possible favouritism toward *Taft* castaways were factors. Captain Gifford's charity toward most *Gibbs* men may have been motivated by the fact that his vessel and the *Gibbs* shared the same owner.

Parker hardly paused to ruminate. The next day, with a few able-bodied men, he started an urgent sail north by whale-boat to waylay the *Glacier* or another vessel. Whalers would soon be leaving the Bay. But could Parker's boats meet anyone in these unpredictable waters? If not, what hope did the *Taft* men have? Parker made Whale Point, a popular summer rendezvous. There was not a ship in sight, and he had no choice but to head south again:

> . . . we have got to the end of our journey, and all the meat we need to eat, we have nothing to do but sit and think. . . . the men are all discouraged and can hear nothing but the murmering over our fate, but we must look it square in the face, whether the Glacier is in Repulse Bay or not . . . we have got to make some preparations after we get to Marble Island. . . .

Parker then considered sailing to York Factory and trekking overland to civilization. Leaving a message on a staff at Whale Point, the *Taft* men turned south again, camping on the mainland opposite Marble Island on 14 August. There, shivering in their tents during a northwester, the men spotted a sail. It was indeed the *Glacier*, which, unaware of the *Taft* disaster, had put into Marble for water. On 15 August, Parker and his men were joyfully reunited aboard the ship. 'This ends,' Parker wrote, 'what some might call the pleasure of cruising and sailing but it is rather tough.'

The *Glacier*'s return to New Bedford was given only brief notice by the trade's newspaper, *The Whalemen's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript*. Still reeling from the Alaskan arctic whaling disaster of 1871, local merchants were most interested in the economics of the *Gibbs* and *Taft* wrecks: the *Gibbs* was fully insured, while the *Taft* was only fractionally covered. Little was published about human losses, but on 30 September 1873, the *Shipping List* acknowledged the curious waterfront sight of men clad in animal skins leaving the *Glacier*.

No public issue was ever made of Parker's abandonment by Captain Gifford. Parker himself kept silent. The latter pages of his journal, in which he must have reflected on this, have been roughly torn out. A few word fragments on the jagged page roots remain to tantalize the reader.

George Parker never went to sea again. A confirmed landlubber at thirty-seven, he stuck to such onshore occupations as storekeeping and farming. He died in Acushnet in 1912, well-respected locally.

In many ways, Parker typified the American skippers who whaled Hudson Bay: he took all that the Bay offered. But too much was not enough. Unlike most other grounds, the Bay accommodated only the luckiest whalemen.

Some whaleships returned to Marble for years after the disasters, stripping the *Taft*'s hulk for lumber and firewood. Soon the details of the *Taft* and *Gibbs* wrecks grew vague. As whales became scarce, Marble's popularity dwindled. Eventually, her harbour was abandoned. But echoes of the disasters have continued to reverberate. Arthur C. Watson, in *The Long Harpoon* (New Bedford, 1929), relates that in 1928, a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police discovered at Baker Lake a wooden board bearing names and numbers. It proved to be a coded graves marker that *Gibbs* survivors had erected on Deadman Island. How it had found its way so far inland is not known. ◆

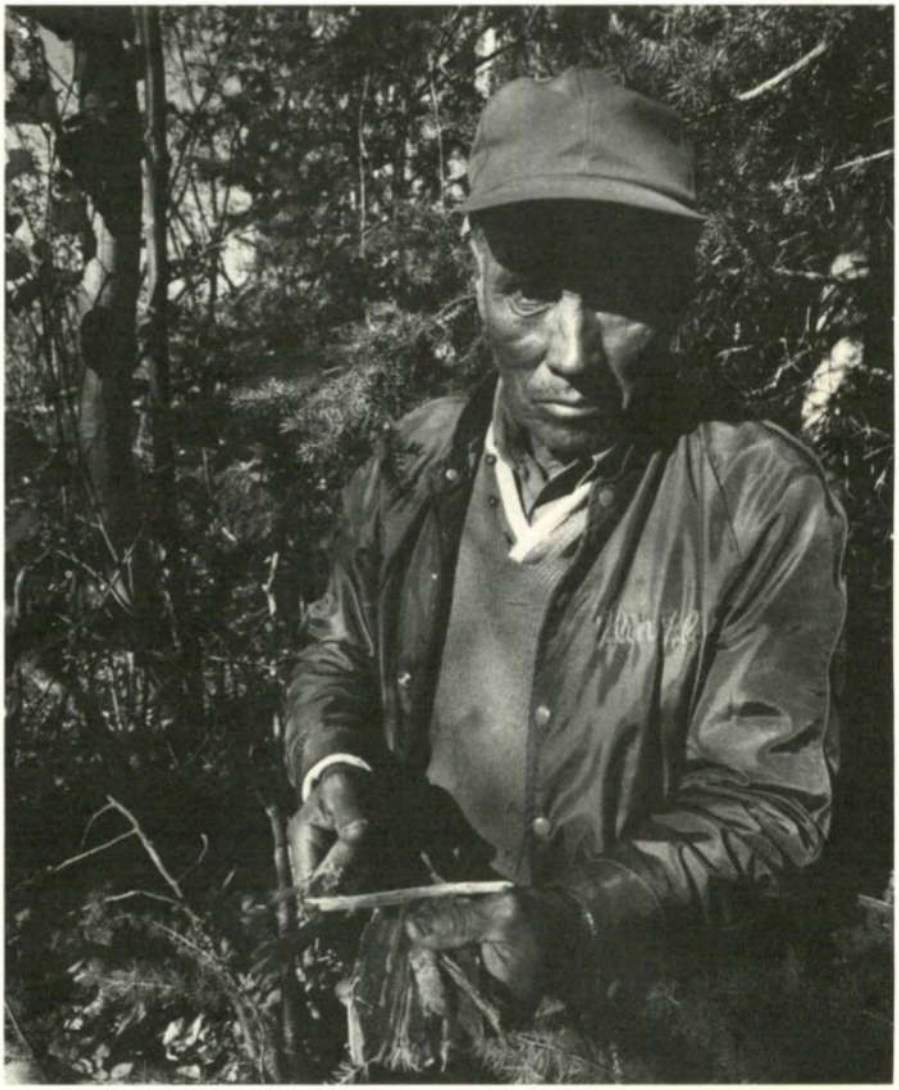
Natural Medicines of the Cree Indians

By Frank Fieber

Andrew Custer gathers 'weegees' or 'sweetgrass'. This root is commonly used by many Indians in the same way as aspirin. It can be chewed and held in the mouth to numb a toothache or soothe a sore throat, boiled to make tea to treat a common cold, or chewed and applied to a wound as an antiseptic and pain-killer.

IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN Andrew Custer of Pelican Narrows and Bill Merasty of Deware Beach, demonstrate the use of some of the old natural medicines provided by the land. These glimpses of the early ways are not the medicine man's material but simply information that almost any Cree Indian elder would possess as part of his survival needs. They are single aspects of a complex body of knowledge which has been largely set aside with the coming of the white man's medicine and technology.

Photographer and film-maker Frank Fieber of Birch Lake, Saskatchewan, has recorded for the National Film Board the changing way of life among the Indian people in the bushlands of northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.



Green tamarack held by Bill Merasty is used as a remedy for 'sore bones' (arthritis). The trunk near the top of the tree is chopped into small pieces and boiled for ten minutes. The liquid is drunk and the sticks are saved. This process is repeated every two days for a week using the same pieces. At the end of this time the sticks are buried again in the forest they were taken from.

Andrew Custer digging 'red rock' medicine. For many generations Indian people have come to 'Medicine Point' to dig up handfuls of the red earth. The earth is thrown on hot rocks in a 'sweat-house' and the vapour is inhaled. It is also moistened to make a poultice to draw out infection.

Balsam gum, extracted from bubbles on the bark, is boiled (1 teaspoon of gum to a cup of water) and taken for a sore chest and coughing.

To prevent bee stings from swelling, the inner bark of the poplar tree is scraped off and held on the sting for several minutes.

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES JOHN BRYDGES 1879-1882

Edited by Hartwell Bowsfield, with an introduction by Alan Wilson. Volume XXXI, Hudson's Bay Record Society, Winnipeg, 1977. 328 pp. Issued to members of the Society.

Application for membership ($7.50 a year; one volume published every second year) may be obtained from the Secretary, Hudson's Bay Record Society, 77 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3C 2R1.

Reviewed by H. J. Selwood

There are few more momentous years in the history of Canada or the Hudson's Bay Company than those spanned by this, the latest volume in the series produced by the Hudson's Bay Record Society. Posterity is fortunate indeed that Charles Brydges was required to report on events and that his letters have been preserved.

Charles Brydges was the Hudson's Bay Company's Land Commissioner between 1879 and 1889, but his reports to the Governor and Committee are so comprehensive and detailed that the editors have quite rightly chosen to publish in this volume only those written during his first years in office. Within this period the continental railway issue was largely resolved and settlement of the prairies started in earnest. At the same time the Hudson's Bay Company began to shift its emphasis from the fur trade. Under Brydges' leadership the Company geared up to dispose of its massive land grants in the North-west. Although this was Brydges' primary responsibility, his letters reveal his deep involvement and are therefore a valuable commentary on many other aspects of the Company's operations.

On taking up his appointment Brydges energetically threw himself into the job. Highly critical of his predecessor, Donald Smith, whom he felt had left the Land Office in a sorry condition, Brydges prepared for the soon-expected influx of settlers. A more spacious office was acquired and additional staff taken on. Townsites had to be selected, rural lands surveyed, inventories drawn up and promotional material prepared. In taking stock, Brydges also found that final agreement still had to be reached with the federal government on the land grants and other matters of importance to the Company. These required complex and often delicate negotiations.

In his efforts to increase the value of the Company's holdings, Brydges lobbied strenuously on railway matters. His letters reflect the general confusion and speculation over the various schemes and proposed routes, and exasperation shows at his failure to persuade either government or railway promoters to follow his advice. Although he failed in most of his objectives, his extended correspondence on the subject nevertheless makes absorbing reading.

Even before the resolution of the transcontinental railway route, Brydges actively sought to upgrade and strengthen the Company's hold on river transport in the Fertile Belt. Again, this involved lobbying for improvements to navigation and contracts for the supply of goods to its agencies, while pressing the Committee for additional craft and negotiating with other boat owners to control competition.

Brydges also fought to modernize and transform the Company's general trading policies. To meet the growing competition and consolidate land sales in the Company's townsites it was essential that new and attractive stores be built and stocked with merchandise appropriate to the needs of the country's new breed of settlers. In addition, grist mills, sawmills, and bridges were built on Brydges' recommendation and incentives given to other enterprises to locate on the Company's holdings.

Brydges' dynamic enthusiasm and optimistic reports of land sales initially convinced the Committee to support most of his proposals. His arguments overruled those of his more conservative fellows and persuaded the Committee to authorize heavy expenditures. However, when word reached London that land had been sold at well below its potential value, Brydges was forced on the defensive. The final letters of the volume see him responding to the allegations and justifying his policies. Protesting the constraints imposed on his actions, he stresses the need for the Company to maintain its competitiveness in an increasingly difficult market.

A long introduction by Professor Alan Wilson of Trent University serves its purpose well. Wilson carefully outlines the circumstances leading up to Brydges' appointment and highlights his contributions to the Company. The complicated political environment and Brydges' personal relationships with his associates are also brought into focus. Wilson develops an interesting and rather provocative comparison of Brydges and Donald Smith in which the latter appears in a distinctly less favourable light. According to Wilson, Brydges had much greater imagination and was far more concerned with protecting the Company's interests. The two

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men certainly had very different approaches and the reader will be intrigued by their contrasting methods of operation.

Brydges' personality and his approach to his job are clearly evident from his letters. He believed in being thorough, and it is his thoroughness that makes his letters so enthralling. The reader is effectively transported back to the era, experiencing with Brydges his ambitions for the Company, his visions of the North-west's future and his perceptions of events as they unfold.

The Hudson's Bay Record Society, in publishing these letters, has produced a book that can be read with enjoyment by anyone interested in Canadian history. Scholars will find it offers valuable new insights on the period and that it more than adequately meets the professional standards set by previous volumes in the series.

John Selwood is assistant professor with the department of geography, University of Winnipeg.

Manitoba Archives

Charles John Brydges, c. 1889.

KEEPERS OF THE GAME
Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade

By Calvin Martin. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978. 226 pp. $10.95.

Reviewed by Charles A. Bishop

This is a provocative book based entirely upon primary and secondary anthropological and historical sources. Historian Calvin Martin argues that in the prehistoric period, Eastern Algonkian Indians interacted amicably via a spiritual compact with the natural world. Access to the resources was acquired by observing taboos of respect and rituals of communication with the spirits or 'keepers' of the game. It was the fear of animal spiritual reprisal which inhibited Indians from over-exploiting their habitat rather than a western-type conservation ethic.

Since Indians were accustomed to blaming wildlife for misfortunes, diseases introduced by Europeans and which spread in advance of direct European contact were attributed to angry animal spirits. When their rituals and taboos proved to be powerless against these destructive epidemics, Indians turned against animals who were perceived to be unjustly punishing them. Disease, combined with Christian influences and the cold logic of the fur trade, thus paved the way for the wholesale slaughter of game. At a later time, however, the aboriginal belief system which 'lay dormant throughout the period of heavy exploitation' re-emerged with the institutionalization of the family hunting territory system under which conservation was both desirable and feasible. The new land tenure system became 'a repository for a revitalized conservationist ethic of pre-Columbian origins'.

While few would deny that European diseases and the fur trade profoundly altered ecological, economic and social relationships among Algonkians, the assumption that the Indians blamed angry animal spirits for epidemics, subsequently resulting in animal overkill, still remains in serious doubt. Granted, instances are given where Indians appear to have blamed animals for misfortunes, but this does not mean that they discontinued ritual treatment. In fact when epidemics struck, Indians might have been especially courteous, for to abandon time-honoured rituals might have been construed as creating additional hardship. Furthermore, it is naive to assume that Europeans were not recognized as having been the source of disease in many cases. The fact that anthropologists, from field observations made in the 20th century, have been able to document modified aboriginal beliefs suggests that these had been continually maintained and adhered to throughout the historic period; they did not lie dormant. More recent attempts by Indians to limit their kills to prevent over-exploitation can be explained as a consequence of their role in the fur trade under

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conditions favouring the emergence of the hunting territory system. Rather than appreciating that Indians coveted European goods for their technological superiority, or for purposes of redistribution to enhance status, Martin argues that a transformation in Indian beliefs was necessary before they would engage in the slaughter of game to acquire these. However, the logic linking disease with animal over-exploitation through a corruption of the belief system has neither been proven nor does it conform with the bulk of the historical-ethnographic evidence. The effects of disease were very uneven and some of the most serious occurred after Indians were intimately involved in the fur trade.

There is another serious flaw in Martin's argument. That is the assumption that the prehistoric Indian had a concept of over-exploitation. Comparative ethnographic materials indicate that a concept of limited goods was absent among tribal people because of their apparent affluence until they had become enmeshed in a European trade system where resources had grown scarce. The native belief that animals could be continuously regenerated through proper treatment of their bones supports this interpretation. Thus, Indians did not necessarily oppose killing large numbers of animals provided that the 'keepers' were properly appeased and so long as such exploitation produced, from the Indian perspective, positive results. Caution must be exhibited when employing loaded terms such as 'overkill' and 'over-exploitation'. While in retrospect over-exploitation certainly occurred, it is unlikely that the cognitive environment of Indians engaged in the fur trade had included such a concept. The view that the aboriginal Indian was a functional conservationist because he feared reprisal from animal spirits may only have been a metaphorical expression of an implicit view that waste was considered to be bad. If Indians lacked a concept of over-kill, one which must be based upon the notion that resources were finite, but still considered that waste was bad, then they might have both feared spiritual reprisal and also loved nature, whatever that may imply. If so, both the aboriginal and historic Indian may have something to tell the troubled environmentalist of today's world.

Professor Bishop, author of 'The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade' is professor of anthropology, State University of New York at Oswego.

BLACK GOLD WITH GRIT

By J. Joseph Fitzgerald. Gray's Publishing, Sidney, B.C., 1978. 264 pp., illus. $14.95.

Reviewed by Jim Lotz

For the past sixty years the oil sands of northern Alberta have challenged the ingenuity of engineers as they try to separate oil from the sand and water to which it is bonded. On 25 September 1967, the Great Canadian Oil Sands Limited (GCOS) came into production when the 'minery' — a cross between a mine and a refinery — began the first commercial exploitation of the huge heavy oil deposits.

The Indians discovered these 'natural tar' deposits along the Athabasca River and used them to caulk their canoes; in 1719 they brought a sample to Henry Kelsey at York Factory. Peter Pond noted the 'tar' deposits on his maps, and Alexander Mackenzie mentioned them in his journal in 1791. Sir John Richardson provided the first detailed account of the oil sands after he examined them in 1819.

Joe Fitzgerald, the author of this book, has been involved with the Alberta oil sands since 1951, and was the main 'man in the field' for the Great Canadian Oil Sands when it was building its plant. His book is a mixture of technical information, history and personal reminiscences. It describes the extent and origin of the sands, the various methods developed to extract the oil, and the building of the Oil Sands and Syncrude plants. The ecological implications of the excavations are also discussed; the oil sands are actually a form of 'natural pollution'.

The search for ways to wrest the oil from the sands became an obsession with many people — including a group of New York policemen who formed the Alcan Oil Company in the 1920s. Some unknown Canadians flit through the pages: Sidney Ells, Karl Clark, and Alfred von Hamerstein. In 1905, von Hamerstein lost a barge, a drill rig, and his whole crew in rapids. He swam ashore and walked back to civilization for another rig.

The facts about the oil sands are spectacular, and in places Fitzgerald tends to overwhelm the reader with facts and data. The bucket-wheel excavators used by Great Canadian Oil Sands, built in Germany, cost $4.3 million each. They stand 30 metres high, and can dig 91,000 tonnes of oil sand material daily.

Northern developers are too often pictured as a ruthless breed. Fitzgerald gives them a human face, and illustrates their tenacity and daring. He has a good bear story to tell, and on one occasion was nearly ejected from the Calgary Petroleum Club by a 'real oil man' who saw oil sands developers as a threat.

The book is well indexed and footnoted, and also contains a number of diagrams. There is only one map — and that is on the dust jacket. *Black Gold with Grit* whets the appetite of the reader for more knowledge about northern Alberta and its development, and for more information on the meaning of large scale technologies in Canadian development.

Jim Lotz is the author of 'Northern Realities', 'Understanding Canada', and 'Death in Dawson', the first of a series of paperback murder mysteries set in the North.

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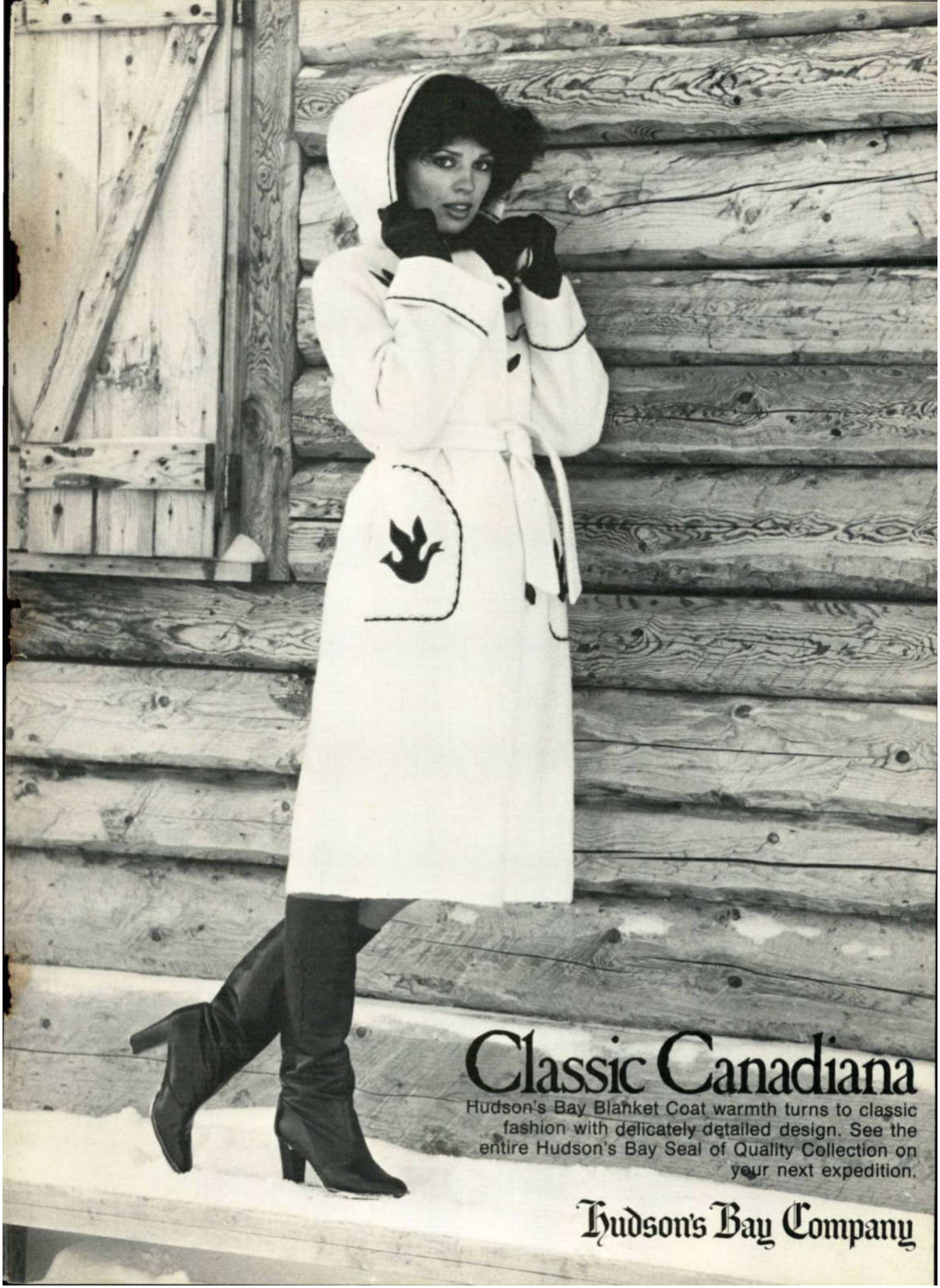
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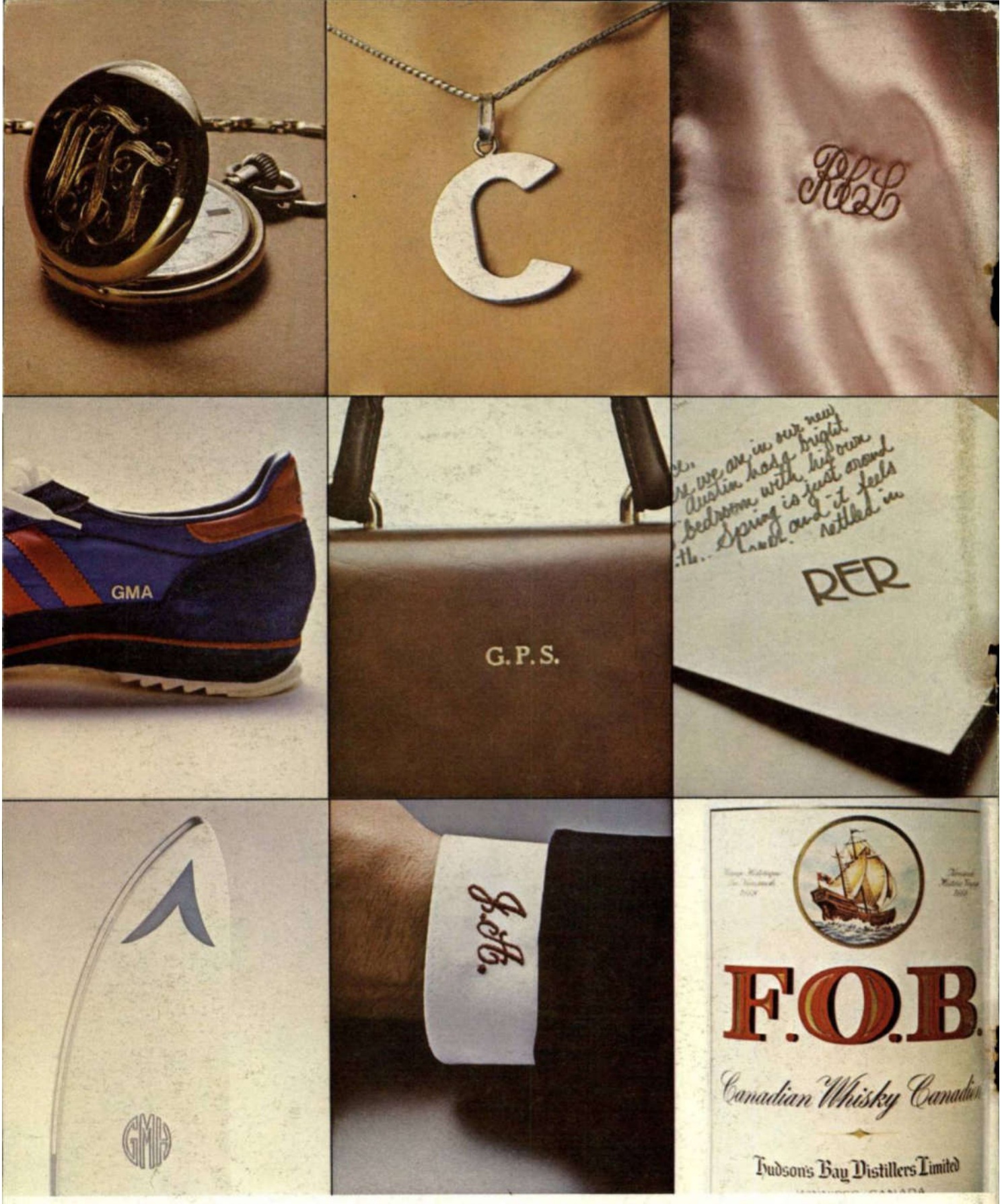

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